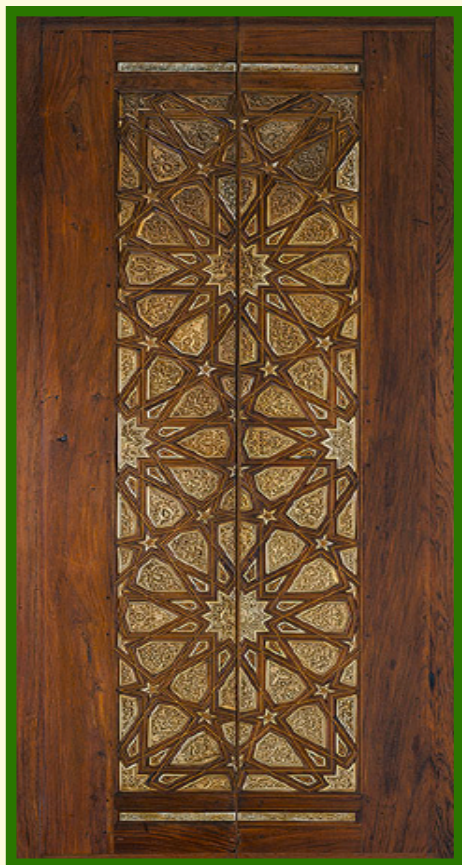


# THE MEETING



*between*

شمس تبریزی – Shams-i-Tabrīzī  
ع

جلال الدین رومی – Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī

*Sunday, November 9, 2014 from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM*  
The Islamic Study Center. Charlottesville, Virginia

Shaykh A. Nooruddeen Durkee

Shaykh Ahmed Abdur Rashid

Live and Webcast



دَعَوْاهُمْ فِيهَا سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَتَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلَامٌ  
وَأَخْرَجُوا عَنْهُمْ أُنَاسًا يَحْمَدُونَ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ

da°wāhum fihā subḥāḥānaka allahumma  
wa taḥiyyatuhum fihā salāmūn wa °āākḥiru da°wahum  
°ani-l-hamdu li-llāhi rabbi -l-°alamīn

Their call there is: ‘Glory be to You, O Allāh!’  
Their greeting there is: ‘Peace!’ [and] The end of their call is:  
‘Praise be to Allāh, the Lord of all the worlds!’  
(Sūrah Yunūs 10:10)



History is never an exact science and is always written by the winners rather than the losers. The telescope through which we try to see the past is more like a kaleidoscope of shifting colors, shapes and patterns. No one account can do it justice or even pretend to report the feelings, thoughts and spiritual states of those involved in critical events. We assume much and know little, other than the facts we have received from other historians and anthropologists and apologists about dynasties, battles, voyages, travels and the like. The case under consideration here is even more occluded due to the necessity felt by those involved to keep secrecy regarding places, movements and even names in order to preserve the continuity of both the transmission and the teaching. So this is an attempt to piece together the fragments of the little that was recorded at the time into a coherent whole which makes sense in explaining what may have happened by its effects on the central actors, may Allāh ﷻ have mercy on them and bless them for the legacy they have left behind for us that we might know the truth ,°in shā° Allāh.

I also gratefully acknowledge all the help I have received from the many excellent websites maintained by the Fātimiyyun, Tayyibis and Isma°īlis on the web.

Please see very important note on genealogy at the end of the bayān.



*notes for a bayān given by:*

Shaykh A. Nooruddeen Durkee

at the Islamic Study Center, Charlottesville, Virginia

Muharram 15, 1436 Hijri

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## The Meeting

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ

inna-l-Lāha la yughayyiru mā bi-qawmin

hatta yughayyirū mā bi-anfusihim

Allāh does not change people until they change themselves

(Sūrah Ra°ad 13:11)

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَكُ مُغَيِّرًا نِّعْمَةً أَنْعَمَهَا

عَلَى قَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ

dhalika bi-anna-l-Lāha lam yaku mughayyiran ni°matan an°amahā

°alā qawmin hatta yughayyirū ma bi-anfusihim

Allāh does not change the favor that He has bestowed on a nation unless that nation changes what is in its soul.

(Sūrau-l-°Añfal 8:53)

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ  
لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ

huwa alladhī °arsala rasūlahu bi-l-huda wa dīni-l-ḥaqqi

li-yudḥhirahu °alā-d-dīni kullīhi

He it is Who hath sent His messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all His religion.

رُة (Sūratu-l-Fath 48:28)



## History of the Meeting between Shams Tabrizi and Rumī

This is a story I have been trying to tell for almost five months, but many things seems to have come in my way, not the least that I have been suffering from a strange sickness (not unusual considering I am seventy-eight) that has sapped my energy and kept me from doing much of anything save my usual tasks of the Friday Khutbah, the Sunday Langar (ਲੰਗਰ) and Ḥaḍrah (حضره), answering the calls of other people who are also heart broken, sick, needy, or just plain confused; also considering events taking place in the Muslim world at present (2016/1438) in Syria, Iraq, Yemen as well as in the USA and as far as we can see into the future – Allāh help us.

Sometimes in this sea of grief and despair, a breath, an enlivening breeze (Divine Impulse) (*pistis*) touches me and kindles in me a hope that I may reach the shore of better health and I may complete this *bayān*. Unfortunately this breeze does not blow regularly.

In any case I have vowed to try to finish, *إن شاء الله*, °in *shā°* Allāh.

At first I thought this would be the concluding *bayān* of the Six Sunday Talks of 2013-14 which we (that is mainly Sh. Aḥmad °abduRashīd and I) spoke on the subject of the “Stranger” in Islām. This talk on Shams-i-Tabrīzī (Persian: شمس تبریزی) ﷺ and Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Balkhī (Persian: جلال‌الدین محمد بلخی), also known as Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī (جلال‌الدین محمد رومی), Mevlana or Mawlānā (مولانا, meaning Our Master), Mevlevi or Mawlawī (مولوی, meaning My Master), and, more popularly, in the English-speaking world simply as Rumi ﷺ.

But between my ongoing illness, Ramaḍān and various logistical and travel concerns that Shaykh Aḥmad had to face, we were unable to arrive at a date that would work for the both of us.

So we have come up with a new idea which is simply to start a new season of Sunday Talks in 2017 commencing with this *bayān* concerning the Meeting of Shams-i-Tabrīzī ﷺ and Mawlānā Rūmī ﷺ, °in *shā°* Allāh and then go on to a new series of talks regarding sectarianism and the present situation facing the Muslim community.

So praying for the readers’ and listeners’ understanding and by way of an explanation, I will now, always, °in *shā°* Allāh, begin whilst asking for your °*ad°iyah* for my recovery.



In recent years there has been a tremendous upsurge in interest in Rūmī ﷺ in the English speaking world both for his poetry and for his being a Sufī, though unfortunately much of this interest has been sensationalist and purile, relating to supposed acts of homosexuality and drinking, but the upshot is that Mawlānā Rūmī ﷺ has become one the most famous and most beloved poets in the West.

We condemn all such views and all those who advance them. Such ideas are utterly spurious for both of these men were of the highest and most pure morals, and the clique of writers who have advanced such ideas are simply trying to build their own reputations and, indeed, should be considered to be part of the general °islāmaphobic agenda proven by the recent public comment of one of them that it is “too bad and unfortunate that Rūmī was a Muslim”.

Given Mawlānā Rūmī's ﷺ position in the eyes of the world, I will start first to try to clarify where he came from and who he was at the time of his meeting with Shams-i-Tabrizī ﷺ.



Mawlānā Rūmī's ﷺ father was Muḥammad, son of Ḥusayn Hatibi from Balkh (Persian / Pashto: بلخ), who was known as Baha ad-Dīn Valad and who was given the sobriquet and honorarium of Sulṭān al-°Ulamā° (سلطان العلماء) or 'king of the scholars'.

This title stems from a dream he had, in which the Prophet ﷺ was sitting and talking with his closest Companions ﷺ in a majestic tent set up on a battle ground, when suddenly Baha ad-Dīn Valad comes in. He approaches the presence of the Prophet ﷺ with utter respect. The Prophet ﷺ compliments him and shows him a place to sit on his right side. Then, addressing the group present, he says: "In our eyes, Baha ad-Dīn Valad's value is very high. From now on, call him by the title Sulṭān al-°Ulamā°." The very next day three hundred scholars who had seen the same dream came to Baha ad-Dīn Valad's school. They wanted to disclose their dream. But before they could begin telling the dream, Baha ad-Dīn Valad narrated the dream to them. They were completely astonished. It is because of the love of the Prophet ﷺ for Mawlānā Rūmī's ﷺ father that he will be called a king of scholars until Judgment Day.

In addition to his wide breadth of knowledge, he also had excellent morals and virtues. He used to do good for everybody and abstained from all evil acts. He lectured those around him, warning them in order to protect them from faithlessness and going astray. He was an eloquent orator, and those who listened to him would be ecstatic with love and faith on hearing his words.

He was not a cowardly scholar. He even pointed out the mistakes of sultans to their faces. Just as Shāykh Ṣādi shouted "You are a tyrant!" to the face of Hulagu who had devastated Baghdad, Mawlānā Rūmī's ﷺ father said to Khawarzmshāh's face that the path he was on was not that of Muḥammad ﷺ. He was not a scholar who kept his opinions to himself because of fear, and he never praised the sultans or behaved hypocritically in search of personal or material gain. Therefore, the faithful people treasured him. The people of the city of Balkh, which was a center of learning and gnosis at that time, showed great love and respect for Baha ad-Dīn Valad, which frightened Sulṭān Khawarzmshāh. Most of the scholars who could not appreciate him and who did not recognize his faith envied him.

He never hesitated at all to express his opinions freely. According to Aflaki, Baha ad-Dīn Valad's father Ḥusayn, son of Aḥmad Khatibi, was one of the most well-known scholars and most virtuous of men of his time. The prominent twelfth century scholar of law, Razi ad-Dīn Nishaburī, was one of his many students.

Baha ad-Dīn Valad migrated with his family from Balkh due to differences of opinion and belief. The ruler Khawarzmshah's relationship with the members of the Kubrawiyyah order was not good, and Baha ad-Dīn Valad was devoted to Najm ad-Dīn Kubra (d. 1221). In his sermons, he openly proclaimed that the scholars who were taken by philosophy and overvalued reason were not following the way of the Prophet ﷺ. The scholars who did not agree with him turned the sultan against him. Meanwhile, Majd ad-Dīn Baghdadī, a deputy of Najm ad-Dīn Kubra, was thrown into the river Ceyhun by the order of Khawarzmshah and drowned. On one hand, Sulṭān al-°Ulamā° was envied, but on the other hand, he was kept under psychological pressure. As a matter of fact, his grandson, Sulṭān Valad, wrote that his grandfather had migrated because the people of Balkh offended him and broke his heart. On the other hand, Sepahsalar and Aflakī wrote that the great scholar of the time, Fakr ad-Dīn Razi (d. 1210) had caused Sulṭān al-°Ulamā°'s migration. But since Fakr ad-Dīn Razi had passed away a few years before Baha ad-Dīn Valad's departure from Balkh, it is apparent that Fakr ad-Dīn Razi did not personally cause Sulṭān al-°Ulamā° to leave Balkh. However, although he had passed away, Khawarzmshah and other scholars who had adopted Fakr ad-Dīn Razi's opinions and philosophical views flinched before this great scholar who fearlessly criticized Razi's views. It was in this situation that Sulṭān al-°Ulamā° decided to migrate in order to avoid further *fiṭna* (unrest). The exact date is not known when Baha ad-Dīn Valad migrated from Balkh.

Baha ad-Dīn Valad left Balkh together with his closest disciples, deputies, and his family, including his wife Mu°min Khatūn, daughter of the sultan of Balkh, his older son °Alā ad-Dīn Muḥammad, and his younger son Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad whilst some of his relatives remained in Balkh.

Sipehsalar wrote that after leaving Balkh, and traveling from one town to another, he went to Makkah, stopped over in Baghdad, went on to Anatolia, wintered near Erzincan, and finally came to Konya, a city in Central Anatolia of Turkey, on invitation of the Seljuk Sultan, °Alā ad-Dīn Qubād.

How old was Mawlānā Rūmī ﷺ when this migration started? This is not known for a certainty. Although Rūmī's date of birth is usually given as 1207, based on his statements in *Fīhī Mā Fīhī* (Persian: فيه مافيه; from Arabic: فيه ما فيه), literally means “*It Is What It Is*”, or literally “In it what is in it” (a late Persian prose work of Mawlānā ﷺ), it can be concluded that this year is not his real date of birth and that his actual date of birth must be around 1200. One can consider that Sultān al-‘Ulamā’s departure date for the ḥajj is again approximately 1221 and that when this migration started, Rumi was 21 years old. However, Sultan Valad states in his *Ibtidaname* that Rumi was 14 years old at the beginning of their migration.

The migrating caravan's first important stop was the city of Nishāpūr, another important Gnostic center of that age. Moreover, Farīd ad-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār (d. 1220), who was a disciple of the same Kubrawi shaykh as Sultān al-‘Ulamā, lived in this city. Both were among the prominent deputies of Najm ad-Dīn Kubra (d. 1221), the founder of the Kubrawiyyah order who was martyred along with his disciples while fighting against the Mongols.

When ‘Aṭṭār heard of Sultān al-‘Ulamā's arrival in Nishāpūr, he went to visit him. In this meeting the two *walis* came to an important understanding of the secret of the Qur’ānic āyāt:

مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيَانِ

maraja-l-baḥrayni yaltaqiyan

He let forth the two seas to meet one another.

(Sūratu-r-Raḥmān 55:19)

It is said that during this meeting Farīd ad-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār, sensing the spiritual greatness of young Rūmī, said to his father: “It is hoped that this son of yours will soon set on fire hearts that burn with divine love.” And he took great pleasure in presenting his book, *Asrār-Nāmah* (اسرار نامه) as a gift to the spiritual boy in his early youth. The boy who would, in time, indeed set fire to the hearts that burn with love and who would become familiar with the divine secrets.

Mawlānā Rūmī ﷺ was very fond of *Asrār-Nāmah* and always kept it with him. Years passed, and when he was dictating his *Mathnawī*, he not only included tales from the *Asrār-Nāmah*, but he also expressed his love for ‘Aṭṭār at every occasion. In his *Diwān-i Kabīr*, Mawlānā Rūmī ﷺ writes: “‘Aṭṭār was the spirit. And Sanā’ī (حكيم ابوالمجد مجدود بن آدم سنایی غزنوی) was his two eyes. We came to the realm of truth after ‘Aṭṭār and Sanā’ī. We followed them.”

### Sulṭān al-°Ulamā° in Baghdad

The second important stop of Sulṭān al-°Ulamā° was Baghdad, which was the capital of the Abbasid state. As Nūr ad-Dīn Jāmī narrates, when the caravan of Baha ad-Dīn Valad arrived in Baghdad, people asked: “Who are these people? Where are they coming from? Where are they going to?” Sulṭān al-°Ulamā° answered: “We came from Allāh and we are returning to Him. We have no strength except for Allāh.” When they related this answer to Shaykh Shihāb ad-Dīn Suhrawardī (d. 1235), the author of *Awariḥ al-Ma°arif*, he said: “Nobody except Baha ad-Dīn Valad of Balkh could have made this statement.” He immediately went to see him. When he saw him coming with his caravan, he got off his horse to show respect, approached the caravan, and kissed the knee of Baha ad-Dīn Valad. He asked them to stay and honor his khanaqah.

But Sulṭān al-°Ulamā° stayed in a madrasah, saying: “It is more appropriate for scholars to stay in a school.” But Suhrawardī did not leave this honorable guest alone, staying with him and serving him.

The Caliph of Baghdad wanted to make a donation to this great saint. He sent three thousand golden Egyptian dinars. Baha ad-Dīn Valad did not accept this gift, stating: “It is unlawful and dubious.” The Caliph wanted personally to welcome him and to have him as a guest in his palace. Rūmī’s father rejected this wish of the Caliph as well because he had heard that the Caliph continuously drank and engaged in illegitimate activities, inconsiderate of the spiritual significance and value of his position. It was not appropriate for a Ṣūfī to stay in such a person’s palace and accept gold that he sent.

The *khutbah* (sermon) he gave in the biggest masjid in Baghdad was magnificent. Countless believers, including the Caliph, filled the mosque. It was so crowded that it was impossible to find a place to sit. Everybody was standing and listening to this great walī. The entire congregation was overcome, and people shed many tears. This luminous and faithful walī who migrated from Balkh and was going to visit our Prophet ﷺ in the Hijaz with his family and disciples spoke perfect Arabic and fascinated everyone, including the Caliph. This holy man who practiced what he believed and voluntarily migrated, and endured the pain of being separated from his home, conquered the hearts of all the people of Baghdad with his conduct and speech. Before visiting the Kā°bah (الكعبة), he visited the hearts of countless believers; he had addressed them from his heart and made them aware of the calamities that °Islām faced.



He also warned them. He mentioned that the beautiful city of Balkh, which he had left, had been crushed under the feet of the Mongols and that the Khawarzmshah ruler Sultan Tekish had been overthrown. The Caliph as well as the believers who listened to him became his admirers. They asked him to settle down in Baghdad, but he did not stay for more than three days. He continued on his pilgrimage. After performing the rites of the hajj, the Sultān al-°Ulamā° touched his face to the holy shrine of the Prophet in Madīnah, the luminous city of the Prophet ﷺ.

The father, along with his sons and those with them, shed tears of love in the tomb (*ar-Rawdah al-Mutaharah* – the Pure Garden) of the Prophet ﷺ who was sent as a mercy to all the worlds.

Then, continuing on their way and passing through many places, they reached al-Quds (القدس). There they visited Masjid al-Aqsa, the first qibla of °Islām. From al-Quds they went on to Damascus (Dimashq/دمشق). Upon hearing that a great walī was about to enter their city, the people of Damascus gathered outside the city to welcome Baha ad-Dīn Valad. After meeting some well-known scholars in Damascus, they continued on their way to Anatolia.

Leaving the city of Damascus behind, the caravan went on to Aleppo where they stayed a few days before continuing on their way. Soon they set foot in the land that in those days was called the “land of the Romans (*balad ar-rūm*).” The caravan proceeded without staying for more than a few days at any place. Arriving in Malatya, they headed to Erzincan. In those days, Erzincan was the capital of the Mangujak dynasty. When the Mangujak Sultān, Fakr ad-Dīn Bahīramshah (d. c. 1218) and his wife Ismati Khātun learned that Sultān al-°Ulamā° was coming to their city, they traveled to AkSehir near Erzincan to welcome him and his caravan. The sultān desired to take them to his palace and host them there, but Baha ad-Dīn Valad stayed in a *madrassah*, as he had done everywhere else. He remained there for some time.

Sultan Fakr ad-Dīn Bahīramshah appreciated knowledge and scholars, and therefore he supported the scholars and poets, appreciated their works, and as an incentive, he donated money for the books dedicated to him. Such a generous and scholar-cherishing dynasty wanted to give their lives and treasure to the walī from Balkh. But, as everywhere else, he did not want to live here under the favor of others. After staying in Erzincan for a while, he came to Larende, or Karaman as it is called today, and continued traveling through Sivas, Kayseri, and Nigde.

### Bahā ad-Dīn in Laranda, also known as Karaman.

Even in this age in which there were no telecommunications, the approach of great saints and highly esteemed scholars to cities was known far in advance, and the people would gather at the outskirts of the city and welcome them with love and great anticipation, an expression of the value attributed to gnosis and knowledge at the time. These glad tidings would spread from mouth to mouth, and it was as if the news would reach its destination by the blowing wind and flying birds. In those days without IT there was respect, feeling, and love in the hearts of the believers who loved knowledge, humanity, and Allāh ﷻ and communicated it. As in other cities, in Larende the coming of Bahā ad-Dīn Valad was heard a few days in advance. The sultan of Laranda, °Amīr Mūsā Bey, who was a lover (*wālī*) of Allāh ﷻ and a man of virtue, along with the other high ranking officials of the town, came out of the city on foot. They welcomed “the King of the Scholars” with respect and love. The Sultān insistently invited him to his palace. But as in other places, he politely refused the offer of the Sultān. “We need to sit in a *madrasah*, not in a palace.” He asked for a place to be assigned to him in a *madrasah*. His request was accepted, and he was hosted in a *madrasah*. However, °Amīr Mūsā immediately ordered that a new *madrasah* or learning center be built for the great wālī and scholar who had come to his city. An appropriate location was found and a beautiful *madrasah* was built. Sultān al-°Ulamā° settled in at this center for learning and there he began lecturing and preaching.

The Sultan of the Scholars was happy in Laranda. °Amīr Mūsā and the public loved this great saint very much. His sermons were a source of abundant spiritual benefit and faith. Meanwhile, Mevlana Jalal ad-Dīn Rumī, as a young but, by now, very knowledgeable youth (شباب), attended the lectures of his father and never missed any of his sermons. He also spent much of his time reading other scholars’ works and expanding his knowledge of °Islām.

### The Death of Bahā ad-Dīn Valad

Sultān al-°Ulamā° was already over eighty-five years old. It had been just two years since he had come to the city when he suddenly took ill in the winter of 1231. On the morning of the third day of his illness (January 12, 1231), he closed his eyes to this world. The next day an immense funeral was held for him. Commencing with Sultan °Ala° ad-Dīn Kay Qobad, all commanders, scholars, and *shuyukh* were present at his funeral.

Sultān al-°Ulamā°, who had taken a place in the hearts of the people of Laranda over the past two years, now was proceeding toward his final wordly destination on their shoulders and above their heads. Everybody was crying. People of sensitive hearts felt they had become the orphans and had lost their spiritual father.

In describing Sultān al-°Ulamā°'s passing away we find that "When Sultān al-°Ulamā°'s coffin was being carried it was like the Judgment Day. Men and women, everyone was shedding tears of anguish. Scholars and commanders, along with the sultan, fell in front of the coffin with nothing on their heads. Because of his sorrow, the sultān could not sit on his throne for a week." The mourning in the Seljuk palace lasted for forty days.

The following was written on his tombstone, which was erected after some time: "Allāh is Eternal. This is the resting place of our Master, High Office of the Law, Source of Wisdom, Rejuvenator of the Prophetic Tradition, Remover of the un-Islamic Beliefs, the One loved and followed as an exemplary Muslim, Man of Allah, Learned Man, the One who Practiced what He Knew and Believed In, King of All Scholars, Mufti of the East and West, the Value of the Law and the Religion, Shaykh of °Islām and Muslims, Muḥammad, son of al-Ḥusayn, son of Aḥmad of Balkh, may Allāh ﷻ be pleased with him and his ancestors. He passed away on the eighteenth day of the month Rabī°-l-°Ākḥir of the year six hundred twenty-eight (Hijri) in the late morning. May Allāh ﷻ have mercy on him."

One year later a simple shrine of sun-dried bricks was built over the tomb of the Sultān al-°Ulamā°. Later, in place of this modest shrine, the Seljuk vizier Mu°in ad-Dīn Parvanī (d. 1277) asked Rūmī about building a large shrine with a high dome appropriate for the glory of the king of the scholars. Upon this offer, Rūmī asked Vizier Parvanī this question: "Can you build a bigger and higher dome than the one encompassing the universe?" The Vizier answered: "No." And Rūmī replied: "Then do not bother to build a new one."

The magnificent shrine seen today was built after Rūmī's death, and it contains the tombs of Rūmī's beloved ones including Sultān al-°Ulamā°. The tall wooden sarcophagus on the tomb of Sultān al-°Ulamā°, regarded as one of the most beautiful examples of wood carving from the Seljuk era, had been placed on Rūmī's tomb until the time of Suleiman the Magnificent (سليمان اول). In the time of Suleiman, this tall wooden sarcophagus was taken from Rūmī's tomb and put on his father's tomb.

A shorter sarcophagus made of marble with a cover on top was constructed for Rūmī. Contrary to common misconception, Sultān al-°Ulamā° did not stand up to show his respect for Rūmī's knowledge and virtues when he entered the room. Neither the father nor the son needed to exalt each other by standing up. However, those who have given their hearts to them stand up in their presence out of love and respect, and they will continue to stand up for them till Judgment Day, °in shā°Allāh (إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ).

Sultān al-°Ulamā° Muḥammad Bahā ad-Dīn Valad wrote a three-volume book in Persian called *Ma°arif*. It is said that *Ma°arif* was compiled from sermons or lectures of Sultān al-°Ulamā° given in various places. Aflakī Dede relates that Rūmī told of what he remembered from his father's sermons (*kḥutāb*) and lectures (*durūs*) while others wrote these down, and even Shaykh Maḥmud Saḥb dried the manuscripts over the oven. No matter how it came to be, Rūmī benefited very much from the work of his father, who was a great public speaker. In fact, the greatest work of the Sultan of Scholars is his son Rūmī. He was his father, teacher, and spiritual guide. After the death of his father, Rūmī lived without a spiritual guide for one year. Then Sayyid Burhan ad-Dīn Muḥaqqiq Tirmidhī became his spiritual guide (*pīr or shaykh*).<sup>1</sup>



I have written all of this with the hope that it will give the reader some idea of the spiritual and religious background of Mawlānā Rūmī ﷺ and to shut up those purient writers and fake lying corrupt scholars<sup>2</sup> who seek to remove Mawlānā from the embrace of °Islām and accuse him and his friend and teacher Shams-i-Tabrīzī ﷺ of monstrous deeds that they declare or subtly suggest they engaged in.

1. Resource: *Fundamentals of Rumi's Thought: A Mevlevi Sufi Perspective*. Sefik Can (ed. and trans. by Zeki Saritoprak). New Jersey: The Light, 2004:
2. For instance: One of these psuedo-scholars who, in fact, has been largely responsible for popularizing Rūmī, called up a friend of mine, whose only contact with Persian language (*Farsī*) is his wife and her mother, to ask him the meaning of the word *Ishq* which is a common word in Arabic as well as other languages. Arabic: عشق; in Persian: *eshgh*; in Urdu: *ishq*; in Dari: *eshq*; in Pashto: *eshq*; in Turkish: *aşk* and in Azerbaijani: *eşq*, meaning "love". [a] The word is derived from °*ashiqah*, a vine: the common belief is that when love takes its root in the heart of a lover, everything other than Allāh is effaced. [b] In Sūfic and mystic doctrine it refers to "divine love" or "a creature's love for its creator"; i.e. one's love for Allāh. This is a central element and theme in Sūfism and for someone who is supposedly translating Rūmī it is impossible *not* to know what this word means. *Who is translating?*



I will now, °in shā°-Llāh, try to give the reader/listener some idea of the teaching life of Mawlānā Rūmī ﷺ prior to the arrival of his teacher, and friend, Shams-i-Tabrizī ﷺ.

As we said, his father, Sultān al-°Ulamā° Bahā ad-Dīn Valad became the head of a madrassah (religious school) at an advanced age. One of his father's students, Sayyid Burhan ad-Dīn Muḥaqqiq Tirmidhī, trained Rūmī in the Shari'ah as well as the Ṭarīqah, especially that of Rūmī's father. Under the guidance of Sayyid Tirmidhī, he practiced Sufism and acquired a lot of knowledge about spiritual matters and secrets of the spiritual world.

When his father died in 1231 AD, Rūmī, aged twenty-five, inherited his father's position as the Islamic teacher (*molvi*) in the same madrassah built by the Sultān of Laranda, °Amīr Mūsā Bey.

He then went on to become a prominent religious teacher. He preached in the *masājid* of nearby Konya (°Ikónvov) and proved to be a well-informed scholar in the field of religious sciences of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), understanding of Qur°ān (*tafsīr*), the verbal sayings of the Prophet ﷺ (*ḥadīth*) and various other °Islāmic sciences.

This was the begining of his public life as an Islamic Jurist (*faqih*), issuing fatwas (religious legal findings) and giving sermons in the *masājid* (mosques) of Konya. During this time he also attracted a number of young and some older men as his students (*murīdūn*).

Whilst the Qur°ān gives instructions on many issues, such as how to perform the ritual washing (*wuḍu°*) before prayers (*ṣalaṭ*), many Muslims believe the Qur°ān alone is not enough to make all things clear and one needs a fully qualified *living* teacher.

For example, the Qur°ān states one needs to engage in daily prayers (*ṣalaṭ*) and fast (*sawm*) during the month of Ramaḍān, but some Muslims believe they need further instructions on how to perform these duties. Details about these issues can be found in the traditions and daily practices (*sunnah*) of Muḥammad ﷺ, so Qur°ān and Sunnah in most cases suffice but very often one needs explanations.

Some topics are without precedent in °Islām's early period. In those cases, Muslim jurists (*fuqahā*) try to arrive at conclusions by other means. Sunni jurists make use of the historical consensus of the community (*°ijmā°*); and many also use analogy (*qiyās*) and weigh the harms and benefits of new topics (*°istislāh*), and a plurality utilizing juristic preference (*°istiḥsān*).

The conclusions arrived at with the aid of a living teacher and these additional tools constitute a wider array of laws than the Shar'iah consists of, and are called *fiqh*. Thus, in contrast to the Shar'iah, *fiqh* is not regarded as inviolable or sacrosanct and the various schools of thought (*madhāhib*) have differing views on its details, without viewing other conclusions as sacrilegious or contrary to Shar'iah.

This wider concept of Islamic jurisprudence is the source of a range of laws on different topics that govern the lives of the Muslims in all facets of everyday life, and it was these subjects that Rūmī was engaged in, both in the more specialized arena of the madrasah as well as in his public talks (*khutaba*/خطب/singular *khutbah*/خطبة) in the masājid and lectures (*bayān* or *wazz*) in public places.

During this period, Rumi also traveled to Damascus and is said to have spent four years studying there.

In short we can safely say that up to this point the man known as Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Balkhī or Rūmī (جلال‌الدین محمد رومی) was a rather ordinary though gifted 'alim whose type has existed throughout the Muslim world both then and now. There are a few indications that there was something (at the very least, potentially) special about him, but for the most part he was not someone who was out of the ordinary in the profession or field in which he spent his life.

All of that was about to change.



The instrument of that change was a man, a fellow Muslim, by the name of Shams-i-Tabrīzī.

As Wikipedia would have it, this person was: “Shams-i-Tabrīzī (Persian: شمس تبریزی) or ‘Shams ad-Din Muḥammad’ (1185–1248) who was a Persian Muslim who is credited as being the spiritual instructor of Mawlānā Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Balkhī, also known as Rūmī and is referenced with great reverence in Rūmī’s poetic collections, in particular *Diwān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī* (The Works of Shams of Tabriz). Tradition holds that [initially] Shams taught Rūmī in seclusion in Konya for a period of forty days.”

This meeting of 40 days is what this *bayān* is concerned with, but first we must flesh out the picture of Shams-i-Tabrīzī, for if you only read what Wikipedia said above, you would have little idea of who this man was, where he came from and what happened.

There are many accounts of who he was and from whence he came:



Here is one: “In a work entitled *Manāqib al-‘Arifīn* (Eulogies of the Gnostics), °Aflakī<sup>c3</sup> names a certain °Ali as the father of Shams-i Tabrīzī and his grandfather as Malikdad. Apparently basing his calculations on Hajji Bektash Walī’s *Maqālāt* (Conversations), Aflākī suggests that Shams arrived in Konya at the age of sixty years. (Some serious scholars have questioned Aflākī’s reliability.[4])

According to Aflākī, Shams received his education in Tabrīz and was a disciple of one ‘Baba Kamāl ad-Din Jumdi’. Before meeting Rūmī, he apparently traveled from place to place weaving baskets and selling embroidered belts for a living. Despite his occupation as a weaver, Shams received the epithet of ‘the embroiderer’ (*zardūz*/رودره دوزی) in various biographical accounts, including that of the Persian historian Dawlatshah. This, however, is not the occupation listed by Hajji Bektash Walī in the ‘*Maqālāt*’ and was rather the epithet given to the °Isma‘ilī dā‘i Shams ad-dīn Muḥammad (of whom more later), who worked as an embroiderer while living in anonymity in Tabrīz. The transference of the epithet to the biography of Rūmī’s mentor suggests that this °Imām’s biography must have been known to Shams at-Tabrīzī’s biographers. The specifics of how this transference occurred, however, are not known.”

In another version: “Shams at-Tabrīzī’s *radiallahu anhu* was from an Ismaili Nizari family in Azerbaijan. His father was a *dā‘ī*, and Shams at-Tabrīzī was raised to become a *dā‘ī* himself. But while in his late teens, he saw something and learned something, that made him realize that the truth was not what he was following. He then became a Shāfi Sunni and studied Shāfi‘ī fiqh and other sciences of Islām, especially Taṣawwuf, the science of the heart, and then all of a sudden disappeared into the vast wilderness of western Iran, eastern Turkey, the Caucasus and northern Arabia.”

In another account: Hazrat Shams was born at some point in the 1180s in Tabrīz (present-day Iran). During his early years, it is said that a group of seventy saints were living in Tabrīz (تبریز) of whom, he was one.

3. °Aflakī: °Arifī Shams ad-Dīn was born between ca. 685/1286 and 690/1291, author of texts on the virtues of Jalāl-al-dīn Rūmī and his disciples. The pen name °Aflakī was apparently derived from his work as an astronomer (Tāqeb Dede, Safina III, p. 5), while his *nisba* °Arifī was taken by him from his Shayḥ Mawlā °Arif Shalabī. His place of birth and the names of his parents remain unknown. According to Aflākī his father was a distinguished man or scholar at the court of Awrang Khan (r. 712-41/1312-40), overlord of the Golden Horde; on his death he left many books and considerable wealth.

Indeed Tabrīz was popular among Sufis and many Sufi saints such as Hazrat Aḥmad Ghazali, Hazrat Najmuddīn Kubra and Abu Najīb as-Suhrawardī, all of whom had spent some time there with him.

From a young age, Shams was gifted with spiritual abilities which his parents could not comprehend.

His father was said to be a good man of generous nature, although he was not on the spiritual path and thus Hazrat Shams was unable to reveal his mystic visions to him. This resulted in Hazrat Shams feeling estranged from his father and others because he could not explain his spiritual sensibilities to those around him. He says in his *Maqalat*:

“My father didn’t understand me at all. I was a stranger in my own town. My father was a stranger to me and my heart recoiled from him. I thought he’d fall upon me. He’d speak kindly to me, but I thought he’d beat me and expel me from the house.” (*Maqalat* 740)

When his father would tell him that he didn’t understand his ways, Hazrat Shams would answer by telling him that they were not “cut of the same cloth”.

For about thirty or forty days, just before he reached adolescence, his progress on the spiritual path made him averse to food, and he would hide food in his clothes whenever it was offered to him.

Education (according to this account):

Hazrat Shams was a Shāfi’i and he studied *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) extensively. One of the five major Shāfi’i legal texts he specifically mentions he studied was *at-Tanbih fi-l-fiqh ash-Shāfi’i*, by Hazrat Abu ʿIshāq al-Shīrazī (d. 1083), one of the leading Shāfi’i jurisprudents of the eleventh century and one of the first teachers of the famous Baghdad Nizamiya College.

He always supported the scholarly study of religion, and he did not like the pretense of those who prided themselves solely on the spiritual path:

“At first I wouldn’t mix with jurists, only with the dervishes. I’d say that the jurists are ignorant of dervish-hood. Now that I have realized what dervish-hood is and where they are, I find myself more eager for the company of jurists than dervishes, because the jurists have struggled to attain something. These others boast that “we are dervishes”. But where is the true dervish?” (*Maqalat* 249)





He was thus very highly educated, although he hid this fact from religious scholars to an extent that his peers were confused about whether he considered himself to be a faqih (scholar of the law) or a faqir (Sufi ascetic). He says:

Someone asked my friend about me, “Is he a faqih or a faqir?”

‘Both faqih and faqir,’ he replied.

He asked: ‘Then why do all speak of his fiqh?’

He answered: “For his poverty is of such a nature that it cannot be spoken about with that group...he speaks beyond the boundaries of knowledge and speaks of mysteries in a knowledgeable way under the cloak of knowledge’.” (*Maqalat* 326) Mawlānā Rūmī described Hazrat Shams as being unrivaled in his knowledge of alchemy, astronomy, astrology, logic, theology and philosophy, although he kept this fact hidden in the company of religious people. Hazrat Sulṭān Walad, Rūmī’s son describes him as “a man of great learning and wisdom and eloquence and composition”

Spiritual Teacher & Order:

During his childhood, Hazrat Shams had a passionate spiritual master, Hazrat Shaykh Abu Bakr Sallebaf (Sallebaf literally means “Wicker-Worker”) of Tabriz also known as Pīr-e Sallebaf, who would often twirl him around in meditative dance (*samaʿ*/سماع).

Hazrat Shaykh Sallebaf had his own Sufi lodge in the Shārandab district of Tabriz, to the west of the shrine of Imām Hafade (d. 1175). Unlike the customs of most Sufi Tariqas, Hazrat Sallebaf did not bestow the honorary cloak (*al-khirqā*/الخرقا) on his disciples to symbolise initiation into a Sufi order.

Instead, Hazrat Shams was bestowed the cloak not through a teacher but by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself:

“Everyone talks of his own shaykh. In a dream the Prophet ﷺ gave me a ceremonial cloak (*khirqā*/خرقا), not the kind that will wear out and rip after a few days and fall in the bath house and be washed of dirt, but a cloak of deep spiritual discourse (*suḥbat*/سبحة), not a discourse that can be comprehended, but a conversation that is not of yesterday, today or tomorrow.” (*Maqalat* 326)

He could therefore might be described as an Uwaisī Ṣūfī, named after the great saint Hazrat Uwais al-Qarnī, who despite never physically meeting the Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was fully aware of his spiritual presence at all times during his life.

After training with Hazrat Sallebaf for some time, he quickly excelled and wanted to gain greater perfection and so went on to seek out the 'awliyā' -llāh (*nuqaba, nujaba, ruqaba, budala, awtada*).

Journeys:

After leaving Tabrīz he traveled to many places including Baghdad, Damascus, Aleppo, Kayseri, Aksaray, Sivas, Erzurum and Erzincan. He travelled hidden from the people, constantly striving to guard his miracles and mysteries. Rather than boarding in Şūfī lodges, which would provide free hospitality, Hazrat Shams acted and dressed like a merchant and would stay in inns, for which he would have to pay. In every inn that he stayed, he would put a huge lock on his door, although within the room itself there was nothing but a straw mat.

Even though he ate very little and often went without food for several days, he still needed a source of income to cover his expenses during his travels. Therefore, he would teach children how to read the Qur'ān and even developed a method for teaching the whole Qur'ān in a mere three months.

When he did not stay very long in one place, he would earn money by weaving embroidered belts. Whilst in Erzincan, he briefly tried construction work, which he had done in his youth, but due to his simple eating habits and perceived frailty, nobody would hire him. Hazrat Shams, like many Şūfīs, was opposed to the practice of begging and so always tried to earn his living, small as it was.

Hazrat Shams' Quest:

Hazrat Shams spent much of his life traveling from place to place and listening to lectures of famous teachers, most of whom he found disappointing in one respect or another. Regarding the Sufis he had met during his journey, he says:

"I have seen many special dervishes and spent time in their company; through what they say and through their behavior, the true ones are distinguishable from the impostors.

"My meek heart will not incline to them unless they are extremely praiseworthy and special, nor will this bird peck at every seed."

He deeply longed to find that saintly and spiritual companion that he was looking for during his journey. He writes: "I implored Allāh ﷻ to allow me to mix with and be a companion of the friends ('awliyā') of Allāh.

“I had a dream and was told, “We will make you a companion of a *walī*.” I asked: ‘Where is this *walī*?’ The next night I was told in a dream, ‘He is in Anatolia (*Rūm*).’ After a while, I had another dream and was told, “It’s not yet time. All things come in the fullness of time’.” (*Maqalat* 759-60)

Elsewhere, he states: “I can talk to myself. I can talk with anyone in whom I see myself...” (*Maqalat* 99)

“I want someone of my own type to make into my qibla (the direction one faces in *ṣalāt* facing Makkah) and turn to, for I have grown tired of myself. Do you understand what I mean by having grown tired of myself? Then, having turned into a qibla, he would understand and comprehend what I am saying.” (*Maqalat* 219-20)

But this is still not Shams-i-Tabrīzī ﷺ.

There is yet another story of who he was and where he came from and it is this story that I believe is closest to the real truth and it is this story I will now try to tell <sup>in</sup> shā‘a-Llāh/ <sup>إن شاء الله</sup>.



#### Shams-i-Tabrīzī ﷺ — Another version

Before I begin this part I should first say that the reader or listener (but especially the reader) would do well to first read my two earlier bayān on Naṣir al-Khusrō ﷺ and Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣabah ﷺ, as they give a lot of necessary and important background information.

Muḥammad, surnamed Shams ad-Dīn, born around 646/1230 in the fortress of Maimundiz, was a son of ʾImām ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn Muḥammad, the 26th ʾImām of the Nizārī ʾIsmāʿilī Shīa community and the brother of ʾImām Ruknuddīn Khurshah, the 27th ʾImām.

ʾImām Rukn-ud-Dīn Khurshāh (Arabic: ركن الدين خورشاه) or Rukn-ud-Dīn Khwarshāh (Persian: رکن‌الدین خورشاه) was the 5th and final ʾImām who ruled at Alamut and was the eldest son of ʾImām ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn Muḥammad, who was murdered by Ḥasan Mazandarani, an agent of Khwarzām Shāh. He succeeded his murdered father to the ʾImāmate in 1255. ʾImām Rukn-ud-Dīn is chiefly known for engaging in a long, unsuccessful, series of negotiations with the invading Mongols, and it was under his leadership that the Alamūt Castle finally surrendered to the Mongols at the demand of Hulugu, grandson of the Great Khān. ʾImām Rukn-ud-Dīn was then ordered to send representatives to all the castles in Rūdhbar with the Mongol envoys (who secretly, and unknown to him, carried instructions for their destruction) – which led to forty castles being demolished.

Hulugu then proceeded to the foot of Alamūt, whose ʾIsmāʿīlī commander was Muqadinuddīn. The garrison of Alamūt withdrew under siege and Hulugu then set out for the ʾIsmāʿīlī castle at Lamasar.

Berthold Spuler writes in *The Muslim World* (London, 1969, 2:18) that, “The fortress Alamūt offered a desperate resistance to the onslaughts of the Central Asian hordes and only succumbed after a prolonged siege.” Towards the end of Dhū-l-Qaʿda, 654 hijri = 1256 ce, all the persons in Alamūt came down with their goods and belongings and after three days, the Mongols climbed up to the castle and seized whatever those people had been unable to carry off. They also plundered freely whatever they found in the castle, and then set fire to its building and its library. Meanwhile, ʿAṭā Malik Jūvainī (عطاملک جوینی), the turncoat ʾIsmāʿīlī, who had accompanied Hulugu to the foot of Lamasar, had been granted permission to inspect the library. He saved a number of choice books, including some valuable ʾIsmāʿīlī inventions and works, as well as certain astronomical instruments, before consigning the library to flames. Thus, the accumulated literary treasure of about two centuries was consumed and turned to ashes. Jūvainī himself writes, “I burnt them all” (*basukh tam*). Edward G. Browne termed it, “one of the world’s renowned libraries.” Arif Tamir writes in *Khams Rasaʾil ʾIsmāʿīliyya* (Beirut, 1956, p. 195) that, “The Mongol destroyed the ʾIsmāʿīlī library containing over one and one half million volumes.”

When ʾImām Rukn ad-Dīn finally arrived in Mongolia with promises to persuade the prevailing ʾIsmāʿīlī fortresses to surrender, the Great Möngke Khan no longer believed the ʾImām to be of any further use and in 1256, en route back to his homeland, he was put to death and was succeeded by the 28th ʾImām, Shamsu-d-Dīn Muḥammad who was ʾImām for 56 years and lived quietly and, more or less, hidden in seclusion in Ajerbaijan.

This was the begining of the second period of *Taqiyya* (precautionary dissimulation of religious belief and practice in the face of persecution) and it was during his ʾImāmate that Shams Tabrizī, the second son of the 26th ʾIsmāʿīlī Imām came in touch with Rūmī and introduced him to the teachings of the ʾIsmāʿīlī Ṭariqah of ʾIslām.

Shams Tabrizī is also said to have been known as Shams Zardozi owing to his living in a village called Zardoz in Azerbaijanm. Yet another tradition suggests that he had adopted the profession of silk embroidery work to sustain his family, therefore, the term *zardoz* (embroiderer) became his title as well as his profession.

The slaughter of the ʾIsmāʿīlīs carried out by the Mongols in Qazwin and Rūdḥbar, following the destruction of Alamūt, is taken by the treacherous turncoat ʿAṭā Malik Jūvainī to conclusively be the *end* of the ʾIsmāʿīlīs and the *unbroken* line of that ʾImāmate as well.

There appear however questionable reports for the descendants of Ruknu-d-Dīn Khurshah and his followers in the work of Jūvainī. He writes in his *Tarikh-i Jhangusha* (tr. J.A. Boyle, Cambridge, 1958) that “Ruknu-d-Dīn now saw what he had to expect and realized that he could not resist. The next day (November 16, 1256), he sent out his son, his *only* one, and another brother called ʾIrān-Shah with a delegation of notables and officials” (p. 717). This was Jūvainī’s first narrative when Alamūt was being demolished, but while describing the massacre of the ʾIsmāʿīlīs after about a year, he writes, “And Qaraqai Bitikohi went to Qazwin with the order that Rukn-ad-Dīn’s *sons and daughters*, brothers and sisters and all of his seed and family should be laid on the fire of annihilation”. (p. 723)

Jūvainī writes in the first phrase, “his son, his only one” (*pesr khudra ki hama’n yak pesr*), and then, in contrast, writes in the second phrase, “sons and daughters” (*banin wa bannat*). It shows that clearly Jūvainī contradicts his own account, as he had no knowledge of an exact figure of the sons of Ruknu-d-Dīn Khurshah. Moreover, Jūvainī was not present during the fall of Maimundiz on November 19, 1256 where the family of ʾImām Ruknu-d-Dīn Khurshah were living so his account cannot be considered trustworthy and reliable. It is however, known from a few Persian manuscripts that the new ʾImām, Shamsuddīn Muḥammad, had been stealthily escorted out of the fortress of Maimundiz most probably on 11th Shawal, 654 = November 1, 1256; and the Mongols reached there on 17th Shawal, 654/November 7, 1256; while Juvaini himself joined the Mongol after 12th Dhū-l-Qaʿda, 654 = December 2, 1256. Thus the complete extermination of the descendants of ʾImām Ruknu-d-Dīn Khurshah, as boasted by Jūvainī, who *cannot be trusted*, is open to doubt

According to Bernard Lewis in *The Assassins* (London, 1967, p. 63), “The extirpation of the ʾIsmāʿīlīs in Persia was not quite as thorough as Jūvainī suggests. In the eyes of the sectarians, Rukn ad-Dīn’s small son, Shamsuddīn Muḥammad, succeeded him as ʾImām on his death and lived to sire a line of ʾImāms.” Marshall Hodgson also writes in *The Order of Assassins* (Netherlands, 1955. pp. 270 and 275) that, “While Jūvainī assures himself that every ʾIsmāʿīlī was killed; yet even if all the members of the garrison were killed, *still many others* will have escaped.”

It is said the child ʾImām Shamsuddīn Muḥammad was carried into Azerbaijan, where the ʾImām lived for some time. He further adds, “their spirit was nearly indomitable; as it is from among them that the great future of Nizari ʾIsmāʿīlism sprouted again.”

According to W. Montgomery Watt in “*Islam and the Integration of Society*” (London, 1961, p. 77), “In 1256, Alamūt was surrounded and was destroyed, and in the following year the Imam met his death and there was a widespread massacre of the Nizarīs. It may be further mentioned that, despite this catastrophe and the fact that it has never since had a territory all of its own, the community was not exterminated and the line of ʾImāms was maintained *unbroken*.” In the words of Farhad Daftary, “The Nizarīs of Persia, contrary to the declarations of Juwaynī and later historians, did in fact survive the destruction of their strongholds at the hands of the Mongols. Despite the Mongol massacres, the Persian Nizari community was not starkly extirpated during 654-655/1256-1257, and significant numbers escaped the Mongol debacle in both Rudbar and Quhistan. And while Rukn al-Dīn Khurshah was spending the last few months of his life amongst the Mongols, the Nizari leadership evidently managed to hide his son and designated successor, and thus did ʾImām Shams ad-Dīn Muḥammad become the progenitor of the Nizari Imāms of the post-Alamūt period and so the Nizari Imamate was preserved.” (Ibid. p. 435)

It may be surmised that Naṣiruddīn Ṭūsī was not the only person in the fortress of Maimundiz, from whom the internal affairs during the reduction of the Alamūt was hidden. though he divulged nothing about it, which speaks well of his strictness in *taqīyah*. Hulugu, however, included him in his forthcoming operations, impelling some scholars to draw a conclusion that he had abandoned the ʾIsmāʿīlī way. If Naṣiruddīn Ṭūsī had abandoned the ʾIsmāʿīlīs way the Mongols must have known of the trace of ʾImām Shamsuddīn Muḥammad from him, but it cannot be ascertained. It appears almost conclusively that the prime objective of Hulugu was to reduce the ʾIsmāʿīlī powers, and the family members he had seen with Ruknuddin Khurshah dismounting from Maimundiz was enough for him to understand *them* as an *entire* family. It is however worth noting that Shahanshah, Irānshah and Shīranshah; the brothers of Ruknuddin Khurshah had personally come into contact with Hulugu during negotiations, and the family members later on were detained at Qazwin, where Shahanshah was noted as being absent as he had fled with his nephew Shamsuddīn Muḥammad.

No search had been made for Shāhanshāh, which transpires that the Mongols aimed mainly on the reduction of ʾIsmāʿīlī power without taking notice of the descendants of Ruknuddīn Khurshāh. To summarize briefly, the Mongols were quite unaware of the *other* side of the family coin. Scanning the meager chains of a few anonymous manuscripts and the sparse records of the traditions, it seems fairly certain that after leaving the fortress, Shamsuddin Muḥammad arrived safely in Daylam with his uncle Shāhanshāh in eastern Gilan. The ʾIsmāʿīlī dāʾī, Pir Shams (d. 757/1356), saw him early on at Daylam, which he recounted in his *Chandrabann* (p. 40).

The earlier ʾImām, Jalāluddīn Ḥasan (d. 618/1221), was quick to diagnose the gushing forth of the Mongol storms in Iran, and therefore he had taken a few precautionary measures. He had commanded his army and gone to Arran and Azerbaijan to help Muzaffaruddīn Uzbek, the Ildengizid ruler, to fight against Naṣiruddīn Mengalī in 610/1214. Jalāluddīn Ḥasan seems to have prolonged his stay deliberately for four months and selected the most suitable area to seek refuge for himself or *any future* ʾImām in his line during the time of the massacres to come. It seems probable that he had designed a safe route from Alamūt to Azerbaijan. His great grandson, the young ʾImām Shamsuddin Muḥammad, was finally destined to repair to Azerbaijan, in an area he had mapped out in 611/1215.

In any case ʾImām Shamsuddin Muḥammad would have arrived in Daylam before the fall of Alamūt, and he is reported to have stayed in the house of Kai-Kaʾus bin Shāhanshāh at Kutum, a district of Gilān lying to the west of Safid-Rud. Kai-Kaʾus was the brother of the wife of ʾImām Jalaluddin Ḥasan and the hereditary ruler of Kutum, who lived till 658/1260. It seems likely that the young ʾImām Shamsuddin Muḥammad had been well treated at Kutum before resuming his onward journey.

ʾImām Shamsuddin Muḥammad further moved to Ardabil and in the surrounding towns. It is said that he also lived in Ahar, lying about 150 miles west of Ardabil. He is reported to have lived also in Tabrīz, which he most possibly evacuated in the early months of 1257 as Hulugu invaded Tabrīz on July 26, 1257.

He seems to have been known as Shams Tabrīz by the local Sufis in Tabrīz. Pir Shihabuddin Shah (d. 1884) writes in his *Khitabat-i Alliya* (Tehran, 1963, p. 42) that, “Shamsuddin Muḥammad who lived in Tabrīz, was compared by the local people to the sun, because of his shining countenance, and thus came to be called Shams (the sun) of Tabrīz.”

It is also related that he passed considerable time in Angoda, on the old route linking Ispahan and Hamdan. In sum, the accessible fragments suggest that Shamsuddīn probably moved from one to another place under different mantles in the province of Azerbaijan.

The veritable locality of his residence, however, has not been substantiated. Azerbaijan was a big province spread over 104,000 sq. kilometers, bounded on the south-east by Jibal, on the south-west by the eastern Jazira, on the west by Armenia, on the north by Arren, and on the east by shore-lands of the Caspian Sea and Gilan. The most famous towns in Azerbaijan were Tabriz, Ardabil, Ahar, Angoda, Urmiya, Marand, Khwai, Dilman, Miyana, Taruj, Laylan, Julfah, Nakjawin, etc. The north-eastern part of the province was thickly populated by the Turkomans, and the south-western was inhabited by the Kurds. Azerbaijan was a fertile land for the growing Sufi circles, and Shamsuddīn Muḥammad had settled in the northern region with his family, where he worked in silk and embroider, for which the region was noted at that time. Abul Fida (d. 732/1331) writes in *Taqwīn al-Buldān* that, “The northern region of Azerbaijan was rich with the products of silk and embroidery works. The silkworms fed on the oak trees and local women went out to gather it, and afterwards dried it in an oven on brass pans.”

Summing up the travel of ʾImām Shamsuddīn Muḥammad from Maimundiz to Azerbaijan, it seems certain that there were only four to five main stations where he had effected connections during the whole journey. He seems to have left behind at least two trusted *daʿīs* at each station before he embarked, so that the necessary information be communicated from one to another station. It is most certain that poet Nizari Kohistanī (d. 720/1320) had reached the residence of Shamsuddīn Muḥammad at Azerbaijan after getting information privately from the above *daʿīs* at each station, but most probably at Tabriz. It was however most difficult for him to trace out the hidden ʾImām in a big province, had he not known the clues.

The period under review is noted to have left the ʾIsmāʿīlī mission in disarray and it appears that in many regions, ‘work’ was conducted passively and very secretly in accordance with the directives of the elders. The period between 1257 and 1265 was possibly barren for the *daʿwa*, but was noted for the ʾIsmāʿīlīs in search of peaceful regions. The biggest problem was that they had absolutely lost contact with the ʾImām though Syrian ʾIsmāʿīlīs seem to have acquired a few clues of his whereabouts, and travelled towards Azerbaijan.



The deprivation of regular guidance from the ʾImam compelled the surviving ʾIsmāʿīlīs to observe strict *taqiyyah* by taking instruction and guidance from the events of their past history.



So where does this story of the last outwardly known ʾImam Ruknuddīn Khurshah of Alamūt and the first ‘hidden ʾimām’ Shamsuddīn Muḥammad lead?

For my own thinking, and in my own understanding, I dismiss, for various reasons, the first stories concerning who Shams-i-Tabrīzī ﷺ was or wasn’t and favor, instead, the above story with two questions left unanswered.

Given the information on the 26th and 27th ʾImām by any chance could it have been that ʾImām Shamsuddīn Muḥammad actually was himself Shams-i-Tabrīzī ﷺ, the mentor and teacher of Mawlānā Rūmī ﷺ or, more importantly, when Jūvainī mentions in his later account “Rukn-ad-Dīn’s *sons and daughters*”, were there other members of the family of Rukn ad-Din who survived the destruction of Alamūt?

Here I must relate a story or an account that I heard in my exploration and research into the identity of Shams-i-Tabrīzī ﷺ in which account the phrase of Jūvainī — “*sons and daughters*” — plays a great significance.

It is well known that in times of danger the ʾImām would ‘play’ with the names of his children to confuse the enemy which was very real and menacing at this particular time one of the main objectives of any ʾImām ﷺ is to preserve the ʾImāmate by deployment of the tactic of *taqiyyah* (dissimulation/تقية). One of these tactics was to use the same name for a number of one’s children in the hope that if they caught on to one they might not catch the other.

As the story which was related to me goes, ʾImām Shamsuddīn Muḥammad ﷺ had a brother also called Shamsuddīn Muḥammad. When the family escaped to Azerbaijan both of the brothers were in the escape group along with other brothers and sisters (whose identity need not concern us). The important thing is *both* brothers each with the same name, escaped at the same time. The family was almost constantly or regularly on the move to escape detection and for financial reasons. Here I cannot diminish in any way the threat they were under for the ‘Great’ Khan had instructed Hulugu to “*kill every one of them*” and, in general, put an end once and for all to *all* ʾIsmāʿīlī members of the leadership.

The deep reason for this was that both the °Imāmi (Twelver) Shi'ah and the Abbasid Sunnis, (for slightly different reasons) were out to destroy the °Ismā'īlīs whose doctrines and way of thinking were a threat to their establishments because, and *most importantly*, the °Ismā'īlīs had a living, breathing knowable and knowledgeable °Imām and underlying this, and perhaps more importantly from a socio-political perspective, because the teachings of what were originally the Faṭimids were a direct threat to the priest (*°ulemā*) caste that had developed, and continues to prosper even in our time, in both the Sunni and °Imāmi Shi'a branches of °Islām.

In any case, as was true after the death of Nizār, the °Ismā'īlī °Imām al-Mustanṣir's elder son – whose own son, as the next °Imām, escaped from Alexandria and took refuge with Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣabāh in one of his forts – in spite of the pressure and threats the teaching continued, which was the *da'wat al-ḥaqq* or the 'summons', 'mission' or invitation to the Dīn al-Ḥaqq which refers to the two balanced sides of the Dīn, the 'outer' (*dḥahir*) dīn of the era of the *nubuwwa* and the inner (*baṭin*) dīn of the *walayah*, which originated towards the very end of the life of the Prophet ﷺ at Ghadir al-Khum, when °Imām °Alī was proclaimed as the *wali* of the Prophet ﷺ and the door (*bāb*) to his knowledge.

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ

wa kadḥalika ja°alnakum °ummatan wasatan  
li-takūnū ṣḥuhadā °ala n-nās

And thus have We willed you to be a community of the middle way,  
so that you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind...

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2-143)

Now it is traditional that the oldest son of the °Imām is given (*naṣṣ*) the inheritance of becoming the next °Imām.

So according to the first story, whilst the second son, also called Shamsuddīn Muḥammad, was not the °Imām, unless his brother were to be killed in the extermination campaign, grew up in a particular *milieu* and received all the same teachings as his older brother and, indeed, younger brothers who we know also existed.

For the elder brother, Ruknu-d-dīn, who was the clearly designated recipient of the *naṣṣ*, the work ahead of him was clearly defined as the future Nizārī °Imām — but what of his younger brother Shamsuddīn Muḥammad who though he was not the °Imām, yet was a highly placed member of the *da'wat* and a highly placed *dā'ī*?

Conceivably he may have been the *Ḥujjat* or the Proof of the °Imam which means he knew the Principle of Balance (*mizān*/ميزان) and, through his very being, outwardly provided the proof for the °Imām. This assures that the primary means between the outer and the inner (*ḍḥahir wa bāṭin*) forms of religion and spirituality are maintained and kept in balance (*mizān*).

Or, alternatively, he might have been the *dā'ī al-muṭlaq* (الداعي المطلق), the absolute or unrestricted caller to the Truth (more on this later) to whom falls the task of calling or preaching though not necessarily in public. This was the station of Naṣir al-Kḥusro after his studies with the the Ḥujjah, Mu'ayyad fi-d-Dīn al-Shīrazī ﷺ of the Fāṭimid °Imām Ma'ad al-Mustanṣir bi-Llāh (المستنصر).

His task in this position in the *Da'wah* is to provide the adept (meaning one who has already been initiated, not the *mustajibs* or seekers) who have already received the first 'call' and has reached the first horizon where all the proofs and arguments regarding the higher horizons (*ḥudūd*) lie ahead including individual eschatology and the posthumous development of the human being.

When the time came the second Shams-i-Tabrizī set off on his life's work of calling (*da'wah*) and began travelling from city to city seeking those who sought the Truth. In order to protect his own truth and identity he had purposefully learned the trade of weaver and embroiderer of belts and bags for both men and women.

At first, as far as we can discern looking down the long tube of the backward telescope of time, he went to Ardabil and the surrounding towns. It is said that he also lived in Ahar, which was about 150 miles west of Ardabil. He is reported to have also lived again in Tabriz, which he most possibly left in the early months of 1257, as Hulugu invaded Tabriz on July 26, 1257. He seems to have been known as Shams Tabrizī by the local Sufis in Tabriz.

As it was described earlier, it was the practice of the °Ismā'īlīs to establish way stations or safe houses alongs the paths of their travels, peopled with at two or more trusted da'īs who would not only continue to spread the *Fāṭimī* °Ismā'īlī message but who could direct sincere travelers towards the °Imām, or, at least by general directions, to the next station along the way.

Thus it seems that Shams, being a very high da'ī, could have expected some reception, however secret, along the known routes, places where he might find a moment's respite.

At the same time, everywhere he went he must be exceedingly careful as people (then and now) do not want their boat rocked or the religious ideas of a lifetime founded on questionable teachings as, for instance, the Wahhabi teachings of the past 200 years. You must understand, as we have pointed out before, that it was a very risky work that Shamsuddin was involved in.

The ʾIsmāʿīlīs had, only a few years earlier, controlled many of these places and many were known publically but, after Hulugu and because of the strength that their Sunni and Shiʿa opponents had gained as a result of his attacks and the killing and destruction, it was not at all safe to be an ʾIsmāʿīlī, let alone continue the work of the *daʿwah*, except in a most underground fashion. But this was the work that Shams-i-Tabrīzī ﷺ or Shamsuddin Muḥammad (however you might prefer to call him or think of him) was engaged in.

His usual method of operation, unlike the father of Rūmī who preferred the local madrassah, was to check in to a *caravansarai* or small hotel as a businessman or an itinerant trader or a craftsman. In his bags he always carried a large rather ostentatious padlock with which he locked the door of his room — a room, however, in which there was only a straw mat, a jug for water and a neat pile of clothes which he referred to as his ‘uniforms’, as he often changed clothes and his outer appearance to carry out his duties.

Indeed, in his discourses, Shams alludes to the fact (as we have mentioned earlier) that he had briefly encountered Mawlana Rūmī sixteen years prior to this meeting in Konya. He indicates that although he perceived a special quality in Rūmī at their first encounter, he felt Rūmī had not yet reached a level of spiritual maturity which would allow him to receive him favorably.

After waiting for sixteen years, he felt it was his mission to release Rūmī in order to unlock his spiritual greatness. “I don’t mix much with anyone. Even with one so great that though you sift the whole world, you won’t find another like him, sixteen years passed during which I said only “*salām*” and left.” (*Maqalat* 290)

“The outward aspects vary, but the reality is one. I remember about Mawlana from sixteen years ago – he would say that creatures are just like clusters of grapes. The individual numbers are the outward aspect. When you squeeze them in a bowl, are there individual grapes?” (*Maqalat* 690)

In this way Shams went about his “work”, first of all trying to stitch together the ʾIsmāʿīlī network, making contact with old *dāʿis*, and then trying to identify possible ‘converts’ who might be open to the call (*daʿwah*) which he accomplished both through his trade in embroidery and also by spending time unobtrusively, in local masājīd both before and after *ṣalāt* as well as frequenting *ḥai khānas* where he would sit and listen, picking up on conversations of the disaffected or disillusioned or seekers with whom he might have a word or ‘drop’ into their minds or hearts another way of looking at things. Additionally, he would meet with those who had already taken the first step or even had moved up the ladder and fill them in on what they did not yet know. Since he himself was at such a high level of knowledge, he could serve anyone who was at one of the ten rungs of the ladder of pure knowledge and take them step by step. Often when he had brought a group through a number of levels he would leave them on their own, now hopefully more enlightened, company, and move on to another town or city or even village where he would continue the process of calling.

We know that he began this work somewhere around 1257 when Hulugu attacked Tabrīz and we also know that he was about 60 when he met Rūmī who was then 33 or 38 depending on which version of this life story you hear and listen to.

After he did re-meet Mawlānā Rūmī he once said, “I was strongly inclined to you from the beginning, but I saw in the opening of your speech that, at that time, you were not ready for this secret. Even if I had told you, it would not have been destined at that time, and we would never have attained this present moment together, for at that time you didn’t have this spiritual state.” (*Maqalat* 618-619)

“They have sent me because that precious servant is caught in the company of crude people [his madrasah students]; it’s a pity that they should squander him.” (*Maqalat* 622)”

But first we must describe the meeting between Shams-i-Tabrīzī ﷺ and Mawlānā Rūmī ﷺ.

Again looking backward down the long telescope of time we must say that there are three distinct stories (and maybe more but these are the most well known) regarding the meeting. Whether it was purposeful (as Shams had eyes everywhere) or ‘just happened’ while Shams was out on one of his missions there is no real way of knowing. All we know is they finally met in Konya on November 15 in the year 1244.



## The Meeting between Shams-i-Tabrīzī ﷺ and Mawlānā Rūmī ﷺ

### Story One:

In the middle of the 13th Century, the revered scholar Jelaluddin Rūmī was walking through the marketplace of Konya leading a group of his students when a man dressed all in black and dusty from travel approached him. Their eyes met and locked with fierce but, still hazy, recognition. The first words out of the traveler's mouth posed a question that would forever change both men's lives. Shams wasted no time in challenging Rūmī. "Who is greater, the Prophet ﷺ or Abu Yazīd Baṣṭāmī (أبو يزيد بسطامي)?"<sup>5</sup>

Without hesitation Rūmī answered, "The Prophet ﷺ of course."

Shams had to see what Rūmī was made of, so he took his questioning one step further. "al-Baṣṭāmī, the distinguished Ṣūfī, said 'I am great because Allāh ﷻ is within me,' whereas the Prophet ﷺ said, 'Allāh ﷻ is great in His infinite mercy.' How would you explain this?"

Overcome by the personal significance of this question, Rūmī fell to his knees. Shams had just unlocked a door deep within the soul of Rūmī who, even though he was considered a great scholar in his time, found little solace in his library of holy books. He had settled into life as a teacher but felt spiritually unfulfilled. Meeting Shams was unexpected and astonishing. In that instant Rūmī knew that no book could teach him what this soul could.

When Rūmī regained his composure he answered Shams, saying: "al-Baṣṭāmī limited his understanding to one aspect of the greatness of Allāh ﷻ. He was secure in what he knew and sought no further. The Prophet ﷺ, on the other hand, was a seeker who recognized the utter infinity of the Creator. His perception of Allāh ﷻ was not limited to one idea or ideal. The more he knew Allāh ﷻ the more he recognized he did not know, and so he kept seeking. The Prophet ﷺ said of Allāh ﷻ: 'We do not know you as we should.'<sup>15</sup>"

Shams extended his arms and the two embraced. They recognized in each other a yearning to know Allāh ﷻ of an intensity that was equal one to the other. Rūmī was captivated by this wild vagabond and eagerly welcomed Shams into his life.

<sup>5</sup> who once famously (or infamously) remarked, "There is no one beneath this cloak (*jubbah*) but Allāh ﷻ."

Hazrat Shams' relationship with Mawlānā Rūmī was unique in the sense that it wasn't the traditional master-disciple kind of relationship. As we have said, Mawlānā was already a well-known accomplished scholar and teacher in his own right, with a following of his own. Hazrat Shams in his writings talks about his apparent unwillingness or dilemma to behave in the manner of a shaykh:

“You know I have never acted shaykh-like, unmindful of your station, and said ‘I’m going here whether you like it or not and if you are mine, you’ll come with me.’ No, I do not demand whatever is difficult for you.” (*Maqalat* 761)

“I need it to be apparent how our life together is going to be. Is it brotherhood and friendship or shaykh-hood and discipleship? I don’t like this – teacher to pupil?” (*Maqalat* 686)

“I first came to Mawlana with the understanding that I would not be his shaykh. Allāh ﷻ has not yet brought into being on this earth one who could be Mawlana’s shaykh; he would not be a mortal. But nor am I one to be a disciple. It’s no longer in me. I come for friendship, relief. It must be such that I do not need to dissimulate (*taqiyyah*). Most of the prophets have dissimulated. Dissimulation is expressing something contrary to what is in your heart. in order to maintain a certain appearance to the ‘other.’” (*Maqalat* 777)

Despite Shams' reluctance to act in the manner of shaykh, Mawlana Jalaluddīn Rūmī maintained and reserved great respect for him, as a student would show a teacher: “In my presence, as he listens to me, he considers himself – I am ashamed to even say it – like a two-year-old child or like a new convert to Islam who knows nothing about it. Amazing submissiveness!” (*Maqalat* 730)

At times Mawlānā would read the works of others for guidance and inspiration. Shāms told Mawlānā that *taṣawwuf* (ṣūfism) must be practised rather than being studied – “You want to discover through learning; but it requires going and doing.” (*Maqalat* 128)

Therefore, he saw extensive knowledge as perhaps an impediment on the spiritual path: “This multi-talented scholar, well-versed in *fiqh* and the principles and details of the law! These have no relationship to the path of Allāh ﷻ and the path of the Prophets ﷺ. Rather, they cloak him from it.” (*Maqalat* 361) Thus did their relationship begin.

Accounts differ as to exactly what happened at this first meeting between the two, but it was a life-changing experience for Rūmī.

### Story Two:

Another frequently repeated account of what happened is related by Aḥmad ʿAflakī in his *Manāqib al-ʿArifīn*:

“One day, as he [Shams] was seated at the gate of an inn, Rūmī came by, riding on a mule, in the midst of a crowd of his students and disciples on foot. Shams arose, advanced and took hold of the mule’s bridle, addressing Rūmī in these words, ‘Oh Exchanger of coins of deep meaning who knows the Names of Allāh ﷻ! Tell me, was Muḥammad ﷺ the greater servant of Allāh ﷻ, or Bayazid Bistamī ؒ?’”

“Rūmī answered him, ‘Muḥammad ﷺ was incomparably the greater – the greatest of all prophets and saints.’ ‘Then, rejoined Shams, ‘how is it that Muḥammad ﷺ said, ‘We have not known You, Oh Allāh ﷻ, as You ought to be known.’ whereas Bayazid said, ‘Glory unto me! How great is my glory.’?”

“On hearing this question, Rūmī fainted. On regaining his senses, he took the questioner to his home.

“There an exchange ensued between the two men, with Mawlānā Rūmī finally saying that Hazrat Bayazid’s spiritual thirst was quenched after one drink, he spoke of being full and so he stopped seeking. However, the Prophet’s ﷺ thirst was never quenched and he went on seeking, aspiring to be drawn closer to the Divine. It was for this reason that he said, ‘We have not known You as You ought to be known.’ Hearing this, it was Shams that fainted.”

This account is supported by Shams in his own writings, who says:

“The first thing I spoke about with him was this: How is it that Bayazid did not need to follow [the example of the Prophet ﷺ] and did not say ‘Glory be to You’ or ‘We worship You, oh Allāh ﷻ?’”

“And Rūmī completely understood the full implications of the problem and where it came from and where it was leading to. It made him ecstatic on account of his purity of spirit, for his spirit was pure and cleansed and it shone within him. I realized the sweetness of this question from his ecstasy, though I had been previously unaware of its sweetness.” (*Maqalat* 685)

### Story Three:

As I related earlier, one of the ways Shams contacted possible new students was to frequent *chai khānas* where he would listen in on the conversations or observe the loners who had something ‘going on’ as would be evident from their faces or demeanor.



It was the custom of Shams to spend the morning selling his wares usually going from door to door, or sometimes selling from a fold-up table easily rentable in the souk. Then he would go to pray the noontime *ṣalat aḍḥ-ḍḥuhr* and spend some time in the masjid and then go back out to the street where he would find a *ḥai khana*, have lunch and settle in to see what Allāh ﷻ would send his way.

There are two versions of what happened one day on the way to the *ḥai khana* (tea shop) he favored in Konya.

The beginning of both stories is the same.

Shams came around the corner to one of his favored *ḥai khanas* in the neighborhood of the sugar and candy merchants.

Rūmī was seated at a large table with some of his students when Shams came around the corner and saw him.

In front of Rūmī were a number of books sitting on the table.

Muhyiuddin ‘Abdul Qadir Ibn Abi al-Wafā’ al-Qurayshī (d.1373) gives an account of the meeting:

“Rūmī was sitting at the table with some books and his pupils gathered around him. Shams came along, greeted them, sat down and gesturing toward the books, asked: “What are these?”

“Rūmī replied, ‘You wouldn’t know.’

Before Rūmī finished speaking, the books caught on fire.

“‘What’s this?’ cried Rūmī. Shams retorted, ‘You wouldn’t know either,’ and got up and left.”

Others such as the great Ṣūfī Hazrat Abdur Raḥman Jamī<sup>c</sup> tell a slightly different version of this encounter, where water is substituted for fire:

“Rūmī was sitting in a coffee shop with a few books he was studying when Shams arrived and asked: ‘What are these?’

“Rūmī replied, ‘These are called discourses (*al-manāqashbāt*), but you needn’t bother with them, You wouldn’t understand them.’

“Shams picked up a bunch of them and threw them in a nearby puddle of dirty water. Rūmī was infuriated at the ruin of these rare and precious books<sup>4</sup> until Shams reached in the water and retrieved them one by one and Rūmī, to his amazement, saw that there was no trace of water damage or a stain on any one of them.

4. In those days all books were written in ink by hand, and by throwing them in the dirty water the ink was sure to run and the dirty water would stain anything not obliterated assuring this would be a great loss to Rūmī.

“‘What secret is this?’ he asked. Shams replied: ‘This is spiritual inclination and entrancement, but what would you know of that?’”

“Blessing is excess, so to speak, an excess of everything. Don’t be content with being a faqih, say I want more – more than being a Sūfī, more than being an ‘Arif (knower by Allāh ﷻ) – more than each and every thing that comes before you.” (*Maqalat* 231)

He thus initiated a spiritual transformation in Mawlana Rumi. He reports Mawlana as saying: “Since I have become acquainted with you these books have become lifeless in my eyes.” (*Maqalat* 186)

The encounter with Shams triggered the completion of a paradigm shift in Rūmī’s approach to piety and spirituality; he discovered that beyond the safe, dry and socially approved forms of obedience (prayer, sermonizing, discovering and applying the principles of law) and renunciation (fasting, controlling the passions and the ego), there is a meta-spirituality of love, which consists in joyously and creatively celebrating our relationship with Allāh ﷻ.

He has two ways of talking: one public [cautious, dissimulation] and one heartfelt. As for the public one, the souls of all the saints and their collective spirit long to have found Shams and sat with him. And as for the heartfelt one, devoid of hypocrisy (*nifāq*), the spirit of the prophets long for it: “If only we had been in his time and been his companions and heard his words!” So don’t you miss out now. Don’t look to the first, but to this other thing, to which the spirit of the prophets looks with longing and regret.” (*Maqalat* 104)

Take your pick. As I said, we are all looking down the wrong end of the telescope of time and who really knows? All of this took place on the 29th of November in 1244 CE, which is 772 years ago, and who of us, or them, was the proverbial fly on the wall?

In any case, Rūmī’s life was totally changed and he knew it (and indeed had been looking for it). He asked Shams to come to his office in the Madrassah and Shams agreed.

They went there and, giving strict orders to his head student, they went into the room and were not seen for 40 days.

What happened in that room behind the closed door?





### Behind the Closed Door<sup>5</sup>

What happened behind the closed door in that room was the total religious and spiritual make over of Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī.

First we must remember who and what Shams really was.

Many say he was (as we have earlier recounted) the second son of the 26th °Isma°ilī °Imām, Ala-uddīn Muhammad and was born probably in or around 1185 CE in the fortress of Maimundiz.

He is also said to have been known as Shams Zardozi owing to later residing in the village called Zardoz in Azerbaijan where he fled after the destruction of Alāmūt by the Mongol general Hulugu, but another tradition suggests that he had adopted the profession of embroidery in silk in order to earn his living in an inconspicuous manner, therefore the term *zardoz* (embroiderer) became his title.

The words above, “He was the son of °Imām, Ala-uddīn Muhammad” tell the story of what all of the Sunni biographers as well as many of the °Imāmī and Nizarī Shī°a do *NOT* know or don’t care.

That is, they either do not know who he was out of lack of knowledge or purposefully have changed or distorted his identity. We must always remember that the Fāṭimī, and later the °Isma°ilī Nizari school of Shī°ism has, for the most part, always been extirpated and heavily attacked by the majority Sunnis as well as the establishment (Usūlī and Akḥbārī) schools of the Shī°ah.

The basic reason for this dates back to the whole idea behind Fāṭimī understanding that it is not what you are but *who* you are – that whether you are a Sunni or Shī°ah, a Ṣufī or a Salafī, an arch Waḥḥabi Takfīrī or a middle of the road ISNA member or extreme ISIS adherent, a Jafari, Hanafī, Deobandi, Berelwi, Maliki, Shāfi°i or Hanbali, or a king or a toilet cleaner, a doctor or a homeless street-person, or a man or a woman, none of that really matters. Who *you* are is really what matters and that *who* you are is a Muslim.

5. It is not my intention here in any way to validate the slander and calumny of those people who say that what happened behind that door in any way contravened what Allāh ﷻ commanded or forbade or his Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ ever did or did not do. Some of these reprobates may have increased the readership or popularity of Rūmī but they were in truth his detractors and defamers and deserve nothing but our opprobrium and disdain. His son, Sulṭān Walad, looking back on his father's transformation, says in this poem:

Through love, a *fatwa*-writing Shāykh turned poet  
though ascetic, he grew intoxicate

but not from a wine which is made of grapes -  
a spirit of light drinks only wine of light. (*Ebteda-Nama* 53)

This is where Shams began with Rūmī.

We should start perhaps by reviewing the personality of these two historic figures. Rūmī, born into wealth, power and the world of religious politics, was a member of high society. He was known to pull and offer favors. His mother was a relative of the king in the province of Khorāsān in the Eastern Persian Empire, where he was born. His father was, as we know, a highly respected scholar of jurisprudence. Rūmī indulged in personal contacts, favors and friendships. He was known to deepen his friendship to his favorite people by any means necessary. For example, he was close with a goldsmith in Konya. Since it was socially unacceptable for a member of the scholarly class to socialize with the merchant class, he arranged for his son to marry the daughter of the goldsmith to formalize his connection with him.

Shams, by the time he re-met Rūmī, was in his 60s. By then, operating as he did under disguise, he was known as a blunt, antisocial and powerful spiritual wanderer. His nickname was The Bird. The Bird, because he never stayed in one place for too long, and because he was sometimes known to be in two distant cities around the same time, as if he could fly or transport his essence at will. He was in the eyes of people a simple wanderer, a powerful spiritual figure yes, but still a poor, homeless wanderer and peddler of cheap goods in the souk without even a shop to call his own. Also, Shams was terribly antisocial perhaps to keep away the window shoppers and casual ‘spiritual’ seekers lusting after an ʾijāza. He had a bad temper and used to swear even in front of children. This itinerant peddler and wanderer is known to have been seeking a ‘grand master student’ – a student, who would be greater than the great shuyukh of the time.

Shams, knowing what he did and being who he really is, chooses Rūmī as his ‘master-student’. Even though the meeting seems to be just by chance, random serendipity if you like, we know that he had initially taken notice of Rūmī when he was 21, but judging the time inappropriate and the student not ready, he waited another 16 or so years to approach Rūmī again. When they met for the second time Rūmī was in his late 30s and Shams in his 60s.

To understand his choice of Rūmī as his ‘master student’ one must understand just how *Daʿwah* is organized. For a person in the position of Shams, a son of one ʾImam and uncle of another, no matter how exalted his position, he too must move on, and in order to do so he must transmit his *entire* knowledge to another being.

This is the process of making someone to be your proof, or your *hujjah*, in the sense that that person has now become you (in their realization or knowledge), freeing you in turn to move on.

It is necessary to understand the organizational make up of the *Daʿwatu-l-Haqq*. Here are some definitions or ranks. First in line is the “summoner” (*maʿadhūn maḥṣūr*), used by the ʿIsmāʿīlīs to denote someone who attracts neophytes or novices to the Calling.

His function is to attract the souls capable of ‘responding’ to the Appeal (*mustajib*). Though restricted, his function is very delicate as it consists in provoking a break with social and religious conformism, in asking disturbing questions and observing their effect on the potential prospective seeker.

This is exactly what Shams was doing when he asked Rūmī the two different questions; one involving Abu Yazīd al-Bistāmī and the other regarding the books sitting in front of Rūmī.

Next in line is the one who receives the novice who has undergone the “change” and has been certified by the Summoner. He is known as the Receiver or the *Maʿadhūn muṭlaq* who receives the novice’s oath (*bayʿah*) and concludes the pact of initiation.

Above him is the *Dāʿī maṣḥūr* who is a limited caller (*dāʿī*) who has the duty of introducing the now initiated novice into the outer secrets of the hierarchy. He is responsible for providing a picture of the lay of the land to the novice and making clear how things fit together in general and specifically in certain cases.

For instance, when a few paragraphs before this one I wrote about how it doesn’t matter what you are but rather *who* you really are, I exposed the reader or listener to a very basic truth which is in some senses obvious. but actually is very radical, if you really grasp it.

If I then wanted to go further, I would tell you that the limitation imposed on people is imposed by them following the lie of shayṭān that “I am better than you”. ‘Better’, because I am a Sunni and you are a Shiʿah, for instance. Think for one second how that plays out in present day Syria or Iraq. Think of how many people are killed because they have fallen for the myth that being a Sunni or a Shiʿah somehow automatically confers on one a certain position in ʿIslām, or how it allows me to kill you because you are a Sunni or a Shiʿah and hence because one is ‘better’ than the other they have the ‘right’ to murder fellow Muslims when we are told all Muslims, as defined by the Prophet ﷺ, are sacred and sacrosanct to each other.

قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ

qala mā mana<sup>c</sup> aka allā tasjuda idh ʾāmartuka

qala ʾāna khayrun minhu

khalaaqtanī min nārin wa khalaqtahu min ṭīn

(Allāh) said:

“What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you?”

He said: “*I am better than he*”.

You created me from fire, and him from clay.”

(Sūratu-l-Aʿraf 7:12)

Here substitute any of the sects I mentioned: Sunni, Shīʿah, Sūfi, Salafi, Wahhābi, Progressive, Deobandi, Berelwi, Jaʿfari, Maliki, Shafīʿi, Hanafi, Hanbali etc. including the king and toilet cleaner.

All of them give the same line: “I am better than you. You made me a Qadiri and he is a Chīstī” or “I am a woman and he is a man” or “I am black and he is white” or “I am an Arab and he is an Indian” or substitute whatever sect or sub-sect and you will find, when you scratch the surface, unless they are truly ‘clean’ of the sin of *shayṭān*, they all think that somehow they are better than the other.

And if you want to know what is happening in the Muslim world (and the non-Muslim world) alike you will find that it is that statement and understanding that “I am better than you” that is the foundation and basis of every war and horrific anti-social act.

So in the meeting of Shams and Rūmī this is almost the first “truth” which the *Maʿdhūn Maṣhūr* must fully clarify and the first truth which must be accepted by the novice. Yes we are different but that difference does not confer superiority in and of itself.

If you went up another rung of the ladder you would come to the *Maʿdhūn Akbar* or the higher master who might explain what it really is to be a Muslim. Not fake ‘dress-up’ Muslims like the Ṭalibān who pretend to be Muslim and flood the world with heroin or the Muslim leaders who take bribes and order killings and rapes and worse or the punks and hoods from groups like Boko Haram and their compatriots, east and west, north and south, who throw acid in the faces of girls who only want an education.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

wa mā ʾarsalnaka ʾillā raḥmatan li-l-ʿālamīn

“...and We have not sent you save as Mercy to all the worlds.”

(Sūratu-l-Anbiyāʾ 21:107)

How can one pretend to call themselves a follower of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and his Sunnah and not be a merciful human being?

Here some Sunni scholars talk about this °āyat.

Allah ﷻ, says (interpretation of the meaning): “And We have not sent you (Oh Muḥammad ) but as a mercy for the °Ālamīn (mankind, jinns and all that exists)” [al-Anbiya’ 21:107]. The scholars differed concerning the °Ālamīn (translated here as “mankind, jinns and all that exists”; also often translated as “the worlds”) to whom the Prophet ﷺ was sent as a mercy.

Ibn Jibrīn رحمه الله said: “Here Allāh ﷻ says to His Prophet ﷺ: “We have not sent you, Oh Muḥammad, to Our creation except as a mercy to those to whom We have sent you of Our creation.”

Then the commentators differed as to the meaning of this verse: Does it mean as a mercy to all of the world to whom the Prophet ﷺ was sent, believers and disbelievers alike? Or does it mean to the believers only and not the disbelievers?

Some of them said that what is meant is to all the worlds, both believers and non-believers.

It was narrated that Ibn °Abbās رحمه الله said: “As far as the one who believes in Allāh ﷻ and the Last Day is concerned, mercy will be decreed for him (by virtue of the Prophet ﷺ) in this world and the Hereafter; as for the one who does not believe in Allāh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, he will be saved (by virtue of the Prophet ﷺ) from the punishments that befell the previous generations such as landslides and being pelted with stones from the skies.”

Others said that what is meant is he is a mercy to the believers only, to the exclusion of the non-believers.

The more correct of the two opinions is that which was narrated from Ibn °Abbās, which says that Allāh ﷻ sent His Prophet ﷺ as a mercy to all the world, both believers and non-believers. “As for the believers, Allah guided them through him and caused them, through their belief in him and their acting upon what he brought from Allāh ﷻ, to enter Paradise. As for the non-believers, by virtue of him He warded off from them the hastening of the punishment that came upon the nations who disbelieved their Messengers ﷺ before him.” *Tafsīr at-Tabari*, 18/551-552. See also *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, 5/385; *Tafsīr as-Sa’di*, p. 532

Please note here I am only opening up certain vistas or avenues of thought which the reader/listener may not have considered.

And indeed, Allāh ﷻ stresses that *Raḥmah* does not consist in precise observance of rituals but in acts of compassion and kindness. True ʿIslāmīc teaching holds that the litmus test for true belief and genuine worship is that it leads to compassionate living:

1. “True piety does not consist of turning your faces in the direction of the East or the West but true piety is to securely believe in Allāh and the Final Day and the Angels and the Book and the Prophets. It is to give of ones wealth – however much one loves it – to one’s kin and the orphans and the poor and the wayfarer and the beggar; to free people from slavery, to stand for the ṣalah and pay the zakah; and to carry out one’s promises when one promises; and to be steadfast in misfortune, hardship and great peril. These are they who are true (to their faith). It is these who consciously guard themselves (have *taqwa*) for Allah.” (Qurʾān 2:177)

Every Friday in the second part of the sermon, Muslims all over the world hear a verse which stresses justice, kindness and natural mutual love as among the closest blood relatives:

2. “Surely Allāh enjoins justice and kindness and generosity to those near (to you) and forbids all that is shameful, and that which is wrong, and filthy lascivious acts. He warns you in order that you might remember the Truth.” (Qurʾān 16:90)

Allāh ﷻ says that to be godly is to be compassionate. He makes His relationship or His Providence to the common man conditional on common human compassion by claiming that those, who wish to find Him, will succeed only if they are kind and compassionate to all people and all creatures:

3. And as for those who strive in Our path — We will surely guide them in Our ways. And Indeed, Surely Allāh is with those who excel [in doing good]. (Qurʾān 29:69)

4. “Indeed, Allāh is with those who are conscious of Him and guard themselves against evil and excel in doing good.” (Qurʾān 16:128)

Allāh ﷻ says (meaning) that we should be the first and take initiative to do good to others, and, if others have been kind to us, in the first place, we have no choice but to return the favor.

5. “Is the reward of goodness other than goodness?” (Qurʾān 55:60)

Now here we have spent only a few pages discussing some possible subjects which would have come up between Shams and Rūmī, so you can see how it goes — deeper and deeper.

Now imagine 40 days and nights of such discourse and discussion.



Here I have only suggested the bare outlines of the process and, for obvious reasons, left out the exact details, for it is an ear-whispered teaching – one on one and not for all.

°Ismāʿīlī teaching uses *taʿwīl* (تأويل) or taking things back to their source both in the language of the Arabs and its connected meanings, as a tool of interpretation of scripture. *Taʿwīl* means going back to the original meaning of the Qurʾān using tools developed out of the language and the association of meanings so as to create a bridge between gnosticism, neoplatonism, eschatology and the outwardly revealed (*dhāhiri*) religion. The human intellect is engaged to retrieve and disclose that which is interior or hidden (*bāṭin*).

°Ismāʿīlism presents a cosmology within an adapted Gnostic and Neoplatonic framework but tries to create an alternative synthesis. The starting point of such a synthesis is the doctrine of *ibdaʿ* (derived from Qurʾān 2:116). In its verbal form it is taken to mean ‘eternal existention’ to explain the notion in the Qurʾān of the timeless command (Kun: ‘Be!’) of Allāh ﷻ. The process of creation can be said to take place at several levels. *Ibdaʿ* represents the initial level. The human intellect eventually relates to creation and tries to penetrate the mystery of the unknowable One.

Human history operates in cycles. The function of the Prophet is to reveal the religious law (*shariʿah*) while the °Imām unveils gradually to his disciples the inner meaning (*bāṭin*) of the revelation through the *taʿwīl* – the ‘silent’ Qurʾān and the ‘speaking’ Qurʾān.

In repentance, the seeker returns to the ‘paradise in *potentia*’ which is the °Ismaʿīlī *dāʾwah*, whose members are the angels in *potentia*, who are at war and in battle “against the demons with human faces, who are the posterity and followers of Iblis...”

This repentance is caught up in and dependent on knowing the *bāṭin* [or inner aspect: that which is hidden from view] of the revealed Law, or, as Corbin terms it, “positive religion”, consisting as it does of the “knowledge of the esoteric laws and hidden meanings”, that is, the *taʿwīl*.

This cycle is “punctuated by seven periods or millennia, each ushered in by an Enunciator prophet (*Nāṭiq*) of a new Revelation, assisted by a spiritual legate or deputy (*Wāsiʿ*) who is the foundation (*Asās*) of the Imamate and who throughout his period transmits the secret esoteric meaning of the doctrine to the Seven Imams who are descended from him” and in turn from the unbroken line of Fāṭimīd (*al-Fāṭimīyūn*/الفاطميون) °Imāms.

As such °Ismā'īlī thought thus seeks to extend the *meaning* of religion and revelation to identify the visible and the apparent (*ḍhahir*) and also to penetrate to the roots, to retrieve and disclose that which is interior or hidden (*bāṭin*). Ultimately, this discovery engages both the intellect (°aql) and the spirit (*ruh*), functioning in an integral manner to illuminate and disclose truths (*ḥaqqā'iq*).

Human history operates cyclically. According to this typological view, the epoch of the great prophets mirrors the cosmological paradigm, unfolding to recover the equilibrium and harmony inherent in the divine pattern of creation. Prophets ﷺ and, after them their appointed successors, the °Imāms, have as one of their collective goals the establishment of a just society. The function of the Prophet ﷺ (*Nāṭiq*) is to initiate the cycle for human society and of the °Imām ﷺ (*Wāsi'*) to complement and interpret the teaching in order to sustain the just order at the social and individual levels.

For instance, to understand the last point, look to this Qur'ānic °āyāt.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ

huwa-l-ladhī khalaqa-s-samawati wa-l-'arḍa fī sittati ayyām  
thumma-s-tawā 'ala al-'arsh

It is He Who created the heavens and the earth in six days,  
then established Himself firmly on the Throne  
(Sūratu-l-Ḥadīd 57:4)

Now in the present 'scientific' world of evolution and darwinism and Hubble telescopes and the Higgs boson particle etc. consider these quotations that illustrate the great gulf in beliefs concerning origins of the earth and its life forms:

2014-April: Olivia McConnell from New Zion, SC, aged 8, wrote the governor of the state. "The state has a state bird, flower, fish, tree, spider, amphibian, reptile, fruit, and 20 others, but no state fossil. She suggested the woolly mammoth because part of a fossil of this species was first discovered in the state." The House passed the enabling bill. But the bill was delayed in the Senate over an amendment proposed by Senator Kevin Bryant (R) whether to add a phrase saying that the mammoth was created by God during the time of creation: "... on the sixth day along with the beasts of the field." Bryant said:

"We ought to consider acknowledging the creator as we acknowledge one of his creations."

2012 Sept: Statement by Representative Paul Broun, MD (R-GA):

“God’s word is true. I’ve come to understand that. All that stuff I was taught about evolution and embryology and the Big Bang theory, all that is lies straight from the pit of Hell. It’s lies to try to keep me and all the folks who were taught that from understanding that they need a savior .... you see, there are a lot of scientific data that I’ve found out as a scientist that actually show that this is really a young Earth. I don’t believe that the Earth’s but about 9,000 years old. I believe it was created in six days as we know them. That’s what the Bible says.”

Rep. Broun is a member of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee, along with Rep. Todd Akin (R-MO) who suggested that female victims of “legitimate rape” have biological defense processes in their body that prevent pregnancy.

2009-May: Letter from over 50 scientific societies to the Texas Board of Education. It expressed concern over the quality of science education in that state:

“Evolution is the foundation of modern biology, and is crucial in fields as diverse as agriculture, computer science, engineering, geology, and medicine. We oppose any efforts to undermine the teaching of biological evolution .... whether by misrepresenting those subjects or by inaccurately describing them as controversial and in need of special scrutiny.”

1954: Bernard Ramm, from his book *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*: “Conservative Christianity is caught between the embarrassments of simple *fiat* creationism which is indigestible to modern science, and evolutionism which is indigestible to much of hyper-orthodoxy.”

And on and on and on, all of which has nothing to do with anything. When Allāh ﷻ says,

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ

huwa-l-ladhī khalaqa-s-samawati wa-l-<sup>o</sup>arḍa fī sittati ayyām

“It is He who has created the heavens and the earth in six aeons.”

He is referring to the <sup>o</sup>Ulu-l-Aḍḥim or the six great Prophets ﷺ.

The <sup>o</sup>Ibrahīmīc faiths share a belief in the completion of creation in six days, with the seventh day, or Sabbath, having a hallowed aura of particular veneration and sanctity.

It is mentioned in Jewish traditions that Allāh ﷻ, may He be exalted, commenced the creation of the world on Sunday, completed it on Friday and rested on Saturday. The import of this tradition has been hidden from the people since the dawn of time. All have accepted it according to the capacity of their intellects. The Jews revere the Sabbath and do not work on it because G-d rested on this day. However, they are unaware that when the Prophets said this, they meant for people to know that, by the Command of Allāh ﷻ, six Prophets would come to this world to command people to work towards, and for, their salvation. When the seventh came, he would not command in this manner. Rather, he would reward them for their labors. They called it the Sabbath and declared it sacred.

Reflecting on this notion al-Mu'ayyad fi'd-Dīn Shīrazi observes that the exoteric expositors of this doctrine are completely befuddled in their explanations of it. By confounding scriptural statements which, in his view, are clearly symbolic, with crude speculations (as above) about the creation of the physical universe in six 24 hour periods, they have completely mis-understood the sacred texts. al-Mu'ayyad reasons that time itself is marked by the movement of the celestial spheres, with the rising and setting of the sun indicating to human beings the passing of the days.

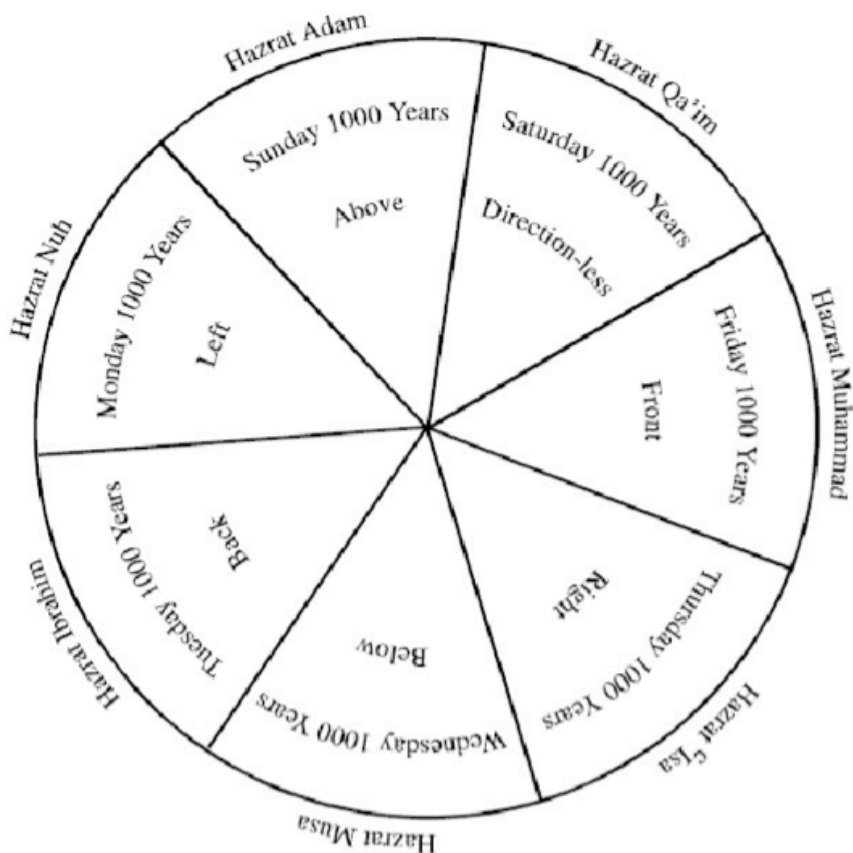
Now, if creation had yet to occur, if Allāh ﷻ had yet to fashion the sun, the earth and the planetary bodies, how then could these verses refer to the passage of time, as it is conventionally understood? The sage is even less impressed by those who claim, citing a Qur'ānic verse, that the creation of the heavens and the earth takes Allāh ﷻ six days, each spanning a thousand years. Certainly, he opines, the Creator, whose power is infinite, is not limited by time in His creation, as Allāh ﷻ says in the Qur'ān:

وَمَا أَمْرُنَا إِلَّا وَاحِدَةٌ كَلَمْحٍ بِالْبَصَرِ

wa mā amruna ʿilla waḥīdatun kalamḥin bi-l-baṣar

Our command is only one word, like the blinking of an eye  
(Sūraatu-l-Qamr 54:50)

There must therefore be a deeper meaning to the six days of creation, he asserts, and it is the place of *taʿwīl*, or esoteric exegesis, to unveil that meaning.



لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ عَرَفَهُمْ وَعُرِفُوا وَهُمْ سَفِينَةُ النِّجَاةِ

lā yadkhulu-l-jannata °illā mān °arifūhum wa °arafuhu  
wa hum safantun-n-najāh

None shall enter Paradise except one  
who recognizes them and whom they recognize  
for they are the ships of safety.



Thus, according to the ta°wīl, these days do not concern the creation of the physical universe but refer to the creation of a spiritual cosmos, a creation that commenced with °Ādam ﷺ, who represented the first day of the week, Sunday, and continued with Nuḥ ﷺ, Ibrahīm ﷺ, Mūsā ﷺ and °Isā ﷺ, who represented Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, respectively. Muḥammad ﷺ, whose day is Friday, brought *this* creation to its completion.

Yet to come was the last and final day which would consummate the entire spiritual creation; a day not meant for the commandment of work, but rather for the allocation of reward and retribution. This was the Sabbath or Lord of the Resurrection (*Qā'im-i qiyamat*)."

As Corbin says: "Time is eternity measured by the movements of the heavens, whose name is day, night, month, year. Eternity is time not measured, having neither beginning nor end... The cause of time is the Soul of the World....; it is not in time, for time is in the horizon of the soul as its instrument, as the duration of the living mortal who is 'the shadow of the soul', while eternity is the duration of the living immortal – that is to say of the Intelligence."

What is referred to by the six days and the seventh in which Allāh ﷻ assumes the 'Throne' refers to the seven periods or millennia, each ushered in by an Enunciator Prophet ﷺ (*nātiq*) of a new Revelation, assisted by a spiritual legate (*wāli* or *wasi*) who is the foundation (*ʿasās*) of the ʿImāmate and who throughout his period transmits the secret or esoteric (*bāṭinī*) meaning of the doctrine to the ʿImāms ﷺ who descend from him. Thus the Six and their Imāms are ʿAdām and Seth, Nūḥ and Shām, Mūsā and Yeshūʿā, ʿIṣā and James the Just (exoteric) and Mary Magdalene (esoteric) and Muḥammad and ʿAlī ؑ. (Peace and blessings on all of them).

The Seventh is the ʿImām Muḥammad al-Mahdī ؑ, who is not a Prophet ﷺ, since there are no prophets ﷺ after Mūhammad ﷺ, who is, as Allāh ﷻ calls him, "The Seal of the Prophets", but al-Mahdī is the figurative 'Throne' from where all that had come before is clarified and rectified, so that the meaning of the cycles or aeons from the aeon of ʿAdām ﷺ is finally made clear without doubt.

This corresponds to the Sabbath or Seventh Day of the Jews when G-d "rested" upon the Throne, having seen one more cycle to its end.

Religion is composed of two parts, one spiritual and one physical.

The spiritual world, which is beyond time and space, consists of the Universal Intellect and the Universal Soul.

It precedes this lower, physical world and its temporal cycles. The two great angels of the spiritual world are called into existence from nothing and are absolutely simple.

Paralleling these two in the physical world are the *Nātiq* (ناطق) and the ʿAsās (أساس) or the Enunciator (of the divine revelation) and the Foundation (of its esoteric interpretation). The *Nātiqs*, of whom there are six, the *Qā'im* (القائم) being the seventh, are the lords of the major cycles, or what may be referred to as the greater days.

These *days* are themselves divided into seven days, the minor cycles, which are the cycles of the °Imāms. The periods are sometimes differentiated by referring to the major cycle of the *Nāṭiq* as *dawr*, while referring to the minor cycle of the °Imām as *zamāna*.

Naṣir Khusraw's predecessor, Abu Ya°qūb Sijistani, traces six °Imāms between every two *Nāṭiqs*, but states that in the period of the sixth *Nāṭiq* (present time), there will be numerous °Imāms until the coming of the lord of the Sabbath, the *Qā°im*.

In this regard, he must have had in mind the well-known prophetic tradition, equally cited by Tirmidhī, Abū Dā°ud and as-Suyutī,

“If there were to remain of time but a single day, Allāh ﷻ would prolong that day until there would come a man from among my descendants who would fill the earth with equity and justice even as it has been filled with oppression and injustice.”

That final day, which is prolonged until the coming of the *Qā°im*, is the day of Muḥammad ﷺ.

Each of the seven lords of the major cycles is an interface between the spiritual world and the physical world. Their bodies are earthly, but their subtle spirits belong to the celestial realm.

It is through their subtle spirits that they accept the bounties of that realm, and through their physical bodies that they convey these bounties to the physical world.

However, Naṣir reminds us, human speech can never capture the reality of the spiritual world, but can only hint at it.

In the minor cycle, the °Imām and his Ḥujjat, or proof, are the parallels of the *Nāṭiq* and the *Asas* in the major cycle.

Hence, in *ta°wīl*, the symbols associated with the *Nāṭiq* and the °*Asās* in the major cycle are often related equally to the °Imām and the Ḥujjat in the minor cycle.

I trust the reader/listener can see/hear the difference between the outer and inner views of these °āyāt.

Understanding this difference one can grasp that this is but a drop in the ocean of *ta°wīl*, understanding that the ears of Rūmī heard even though they were yet the ears of a Sunni *faqih* who was still living in the realm of the finality of *nubuwwa*, and that this was his initial opening to the ever expanding dimension of the *wilayah* which represents the only real hope for °Islām to continue. as it began, in expanding the dimensions and frontiers of understanding.

I realize in this *bayān* I have not touched much on this crucial relationship between *nubuwwa* and *wilayyah* but I have dealt with it at some length in the *bayān* on Sayyidina °Alī ؑ and suggest the reader/listener check the website where the book is available as well as a video of the talk itself.

Understanding the relationship between *nubuwwa* (revelation) and *wilayah* (instruction) is absolutely crucial.

Seven Primordial Lights	Seven Stars of the Physical World	Seven Effects in Human Beings	Seven Degrees of the Human Soul (Da'wa)	Seven Elements (Metals)	Seven Illustrious Lights (The Esoteric Heaven)
Originating from nothing	Sun	Life	Prophet	Gold	Adam
Intellect in its substance	Moon	Knowledge	Wasi (Spiritual Heir)	Silver	Noah
Triad of Intellection, the Intelligizing and the Intelligized	Saturn	Capability	Imam (Spiritual Guide)	Iron	Abraham
Soul	Jupiter	Perception	Hujjat (The Proof)	Copper	Moses
Fortune (Gabriel)	Mars	Act	Da'i (Preacher)	Tin	Jesus
Victory (Michael)	Venus	Wish/Will	The Authorized One	Lead	Mohammed
Imagination	Mercury	Lastingness	The One who Heeds, The One who Answers	Mercury	The Resurrection to Come



All the earlier rungs of the organizational ladder I have mentioned lead to the *Dā'i al-Balagh* who is a high and exalted caller who, as such, provides the once novice, and now adept, all the proofs and arguments leading to the higher *hudūd* (limits or horizons) and *ma'ād* or the details on the posthumous development of the human being.



When all of this is interiorized and has been thoroughly integrated the adept reaches the threshold of being the proof (*Hujjat*) of his teacher, who has either in a fully functional <sup>3</sup>Isma<sup>c</sup>ilī community directed him or her from level to level.<sup>6</sup> If the system has been broken by war, persecution or tyranny, etc., the *hujjah* of the region or island (*jazīra*), of which there were seven in the time of Rūmī, has personally taken the aspirant step by step through the entire process (as in the case of Shams and Rūmī) until Rūmī became the sought after “master-student” and finally the “proof” (*hujjah*) of his teacher.

Now there is no way to squeeze 40 days into the few hours and less than a hundred pages of this *bayān* (بیان), and I have not tried to do so but rather to communicate to the reader/listener some of what Rūmī was exposed to and the changes he had to go through in order to move from the station of a rather conservative socially minded establishment faqih to being the *hujjah* of Shams, who was the younger brother of the <sup>3</sup>Imām az-Zamān (The Leader of the Time).

What then of Shams in this process?

6. *mustajib*, *mukasir*, *ma<sup>c</sup>dhūn-i-mašūr*, *ma<sup>c</sup>dhūn-i-mutlaq*, *dā<sup>c</sup>i mašūr*, *dā<sup>c</sup>i mutlaq* or *maḥdūd*, *dā<sup>c</sup>i al-balagh*, *hujjah* or the (proof, guarantor), also called *naqīb*, *lāhiq* or *yad* (hand) in early Fāṭimid times. The *hujjah* was the highest representative of the *da<sup>c</sup>wa* in any ‘island’ (*jazīrah*), and he was assisted by a number of subordinate *dā<sup>c</sup>is* of different ranks operating in the localities under his jurisdiction. These included *dā<sup>c</sup>i al-balagh*, *al-da<sup>c</sup>i al-mutlaq*, and *al da<sup>c</sup>i al-mahdud* (or *al-maḥṣūr*). There may have been as many as thirty such *da<sup>c</sup>is* in some *jazīras*. The particular responsibilities of different *dā<sup>c</sup>is* are not clarified in the meagre sources. It seems, however, that *da<sup>c</sup>i al-balagh* acted as liaison between the central *da<sup>c</sup>wa* headquarters in the Fāṭimid capital and the *hujjah*’s headquarters in his *jazīrah* (island), and *al da<sup>c</sup>i al-mutlaq* became the chief functionary of the *da<sup>c</sup>wa*, operating with absolute authority in the absence of the *hujjah* and his *da<sup>c</sup>i al-balagh*. The regional *da<sup>c</sup>is*, in turn, had their assistants, entitled *al-ma<sup>c</sup>dhūn*, the licentiate. The sources mention at least two categories of this rank, namely, *al-ma<sup>c</sup>dhūn al-mutlaq*, and *al-ma<sup>c</sup>dhūn al-mahdud* (or *al-maḥṣūr*), eventually called *al-mukasir*. The *ma<sup>c</sup>dhūn al-mutlaq* often became a *da<sup>c</sup>i* himself; he was authorized as the chief licentiate to administer the oath of initiation and explain the rules and policies of the *da<sup>c</sup>wa* to the initiates, while the *mukasir* (literally, the breaker) was mainly responsible for attracting prospective converts and breaking their attachments to other ‘ways’ of thought. The ordinary <sup>3</sup>Isma<sup>c</sup>ilī initiates, the *mustajibs* or respondents, who referred to themselves as the *awliya<sup>3</sup> Allah* or “friends of Allāh”, did not occupy a *rank* (*hadd*) (as such) at the bottom of the *da<sup>c</sup>wa* hierarchy. Belonging to the (people of the mission), they represented the elite, the *khawāṣ*, as compared to the common Muslims, designated as the *ammāt al-Muslimīn* or the <sup>3</sup>*awamm*, who were only capable of understanding the outer (*batinī*) revelation. The ranks of the Fāṭimid *da<sup>c</sup>wa*, numbered seven from the *bāb* (or *dā<sup>c</sup>i al-du<sup>c</sup>at*) to *mukasir*, from the threshold of the door down to the breaker.

Since, as can now readily be seen, all of this, the process of ʾIsmāʿīlī instruction, can (roughly) be equated with climbing a ladder, step by step or rung by rung, the ‘law’ is that you cannot proceed to the next rung until you have brought someone to the rung below you. It is, perhaps, for this reason that Shams was seeking his “master-student” for he himself, could not go on, could not leave his post as the *ḥujjah* of his brother and uncle, until he brought someone else to the position or level which is what he did with Rūmī over that period of 40 days in the room *behind* the door.

This in turn allowed Shams to move to the next level which was the station or *maqām* of the threshold or the door (*al-bāb*). Henri Corbin has this to say of the Bāb: “In later ʾIsmaʿīlism, which has become more of a personal religion of individual salvation [rather than an establishment of the outer *dḥahiri* religion] (think al-Azhar or Qum), when the Ḥujjat has become assimilated (with his student) he rises to the state of the Bāb or the Threshold of the ʾImām and becomes the ephiphanic form of the ʾImam, the sign of his Invisibility (*al-aʾimma al-masturin*). On him rests the articulation of the visible with the invisible known as *faṣl al-khiṭāb* or the ‘entrance into matter’ through which the ʾImām, who must remain invisible in the time of the *saṭr* or veil due to the threat level, manifests in the world.”

There is no further rung to climb, which shows the great importance of the *Bāb*, as the next rung is the ʾImām who is who he is because of the *Naṣṣ* or election by the previous ʾImām and who in turn is responsible for appointing or designating or transferring by *naṣṣ* the next ʾImām who was ʾImām Qassim Shah (1310–1368) who lived, as did his father ʾImām Shams-uddīn Muḥammad, in Azerbhajjan under an assumed identity (Daftary and Hirji, 2008). Under his 60-year rule, the ʾIsmāʿīlīs lived peaceful lives by continuing to practice *taqiyya*. ʾImām Qassim Shah sent Pir Shams to India, where he converted a significant number of inhabitants, including many Mongols, Tatars and Central Asians, mainly small merchants and travellers, to the ʾIsmāʿīlī tariqah of ʾIslām.

Here more needs to be said of the *Bāb*.

First of all this title or function should not in *any way* be confused with the use of this term by either the Bābis or the Bahaʾis, 19th century breakaway sects of the ʾImāmī Shiʿa, similar, to some extent, to the Aḥmadiya in Sunni ʾIslam and occurring in roughly the same time period.



## The Bāb

In the human being, the crowning product of the world, we find proofs of the activities of the *Nafs* and of *‘Aql*. From this we may infer that the world was produced by the Self, supported (*ta’yid*) by the *‘Aql*. When the Lords of the Truth, the Prophets ﷺ had revealed all this to us, our reason understood it, knowing that it was really so. This is because in this world, the *‘Aql-i Kull* is the true *‘Imām* (*‘Imāmu-l-ḥaqq*), which the faithful believers (*mu’minīn*) are in possession of: individual reason (*‘aql-ḥayu-l-juzwi*). As (individual) reason receives manifest proofs or signs (*athār*) from the *‘Aql al-Kull*, it is capable of understanding this. If it had no such force, it would be unable to comprehend it. It comprehends the true parts of the objects in its very *genus*. This is why Allāh ﷻ says:

أَفَلَا يَنْدَبُ رُؤْنَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

‘afalā yatadabbarūna -l-qur’ana  
wa low kana min ‘indi ḡhayri-llāhi  
low wajaḍū fihi ‘ikhtilafan kathīran

Will they not reflect on the Qur’ān?

Had it been from other than Allah,

they would have found many inconsistencies in it.

(Sūratu-n-Nisāa° 4:82)

The *ta’wīl* of this verse shows that the Qur’ān, as it is known to us, contains beyond the *‘āyats* that command (*ḥukm*)<sup>7</sup> many symbols or parables (*amthāl*). Reason alone cannot understand their implications and is bewildered by their contradictions, if their true implications are not revealed by the true *‘Imām* (*‘imāmu-l-ḥaqq*).

As we see variant arrangements (*ḥikmat*) in the world and are yet powerless to understand them, unless someone explains them to us, Allāh ﷻ deemed it wise to send someone from amongst human beings who would explain to people the story of the creation and would call them to follow the straight way (*ṣiraṭu-l-mustaqīm*).

Such a person would occupy in this world the same position as the *‘Aql* occupies in the higher world.

He is the *Nātiq*, He has the power to comprehend by his knowledge (*‘ilm*) all the powers of the *Nafs-i-Kull*, thus becoming an intermediary (*miyanaji*) between the two worlds and deriving his knowledge, through his clear mind, from the subtle (*laṭīf*) spiritual (*laṭīf*) world in eloquent (*fasiḥ*) language

7. don’t eat dead meat, don’t eat pig, don’t murder, don’t steal, pay your zakāt, make ḥajj if you can, do fast the month of Ramaḍān, do make ṣalat etc.

Allāh says: “The Faithful Spirit (*ar-Ruḥu-l-Amīn*) came down with revelation upon your heart in order that you should be of those who warn in clear Arabic (*i.e.* in an eloquent tongue).” (26:193-195).

Therefore the Prophet ﷺ, who is the *Nāṭiq* in the material (*jismani*) world, is the ultimate limit (*ghayat-i hama'i gayath*) in knowledge, and no material being (*hadd-i jismani*) can be superior to him. His learning of the knowledge of the higher world (*alam-i-ulwi*) was done through his luminous soul (*naḥs-i-rawshan*), and not through his physical ears in the manner in which we hear.

From the *Naḥs-i-Kullī*, which is beyond time, today is just the same as it was at the beginning of being (*awwal-i-hastih*). In the material world, however, it gradually reveals in time that potentiality (*quwwat*) which it had received from the *‘Aql-i-Kull*. The Prophet ﷺ, in a similar way, entrusted those powers (*quwwah*) which he received by his enlightened soul from the higher world (*‘alam-i-ulwi*), to one person. That person was worthy to keep the deposit (*wadi'at*) of Divine Signs and still unrevealed mysteries. These were revealed to him in their entirety, without explanation or comment (*bi-shar wa bi-tafṣīl*). That person was the *‘Aṣās* (foundation) of the Prophet who had to deliver all this to humanity in the course of time, with necessary explanations, as Allāh ﷻ says

وَقُرْآنًا فَرَقْنَاهُ لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلَى مُكْثٍ وَنَزَّلْنَاهُ تَنْزِيلًا

wa qur'ānan farāqnahu li-taqraahu 'ala -n-nāsi 'alā mukthīn  
wa nazzalnāhu tanzīlan

And a Qur'ān that We have separated, so that you may relate it to the people over time; and We have brought it [down] in parts.

(Sūraul-‘Isra 17:106)

In order that those who come after you ﷺ, the *‘Imāms* ؑ, by the command of Allāh ﷻ, at their own time should explain the Book to people, bringing its meaning from the form (of the letter) of the Divine Revelation (*tanzīl*) into that of the revelation of its inner sense (*ta'wīl*) and spreading it in time amongst humanity.

He, the Prophet ﷺ, at the end of his life, left the command to his inheritor, *‘Alī* ؑ, whose descendents are the true *‘Imāms* who convey to people its inner meaning. As Allāh ﷻ says to the Prophet ﷺ,

إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنْذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ

“You are only a warner, and every people has its guide”  
(Ra'd 13:7).

As this world is the product of the *Nafs-i-Kull*, supported (*ta'yid*) by the *ʿAql-i-Kull*, so the world of religion (*ʿalam-i dīn*) is the creation of the *Asas* (base or foundation) (*ʿImām* ﷺ), acting with the powers (*quwwah*) received from the *Nāṭiq* ﷺ (the Prophet ﷺ).

Of all the principles of the spiritual world (*ḥudūd-i ʿalam-i-latāʾif*), the first is the *ʿAql* which is superior to everything in the higher world. Below it are three: (the *bāb*, the *ḥujjah*, *dāʿi mutlāq* (the unrestricted caller) in the hierarchy of the creation (*bi-tartib*/by the order of things). These three are the principles of the higher world, whence they are manifested in the lower world (*ʿalam-i-sufli*). Here the *Nāṭiq* (Prophet ﷺ) corresponds to the *ʿAql* (of the higher world), being the highest and finest point in humanity. He occupies, in comparison with other men, the position of the sky which nothing on the earth can reach. Below him there is the *Asas* or Foundation (*ʿImām*) , corresponding to the *Nafs-i-Kull*. He is the Master of the *Tawʿīl* of the explanation of the law (*shariʿah*), just as the *Nafs-i-Kull* is the master of the composition of the lower world (*ʿalam-i-sufli*). Below him is the *ʿAql-i-Kull* corresponding to the *Hujjah* who is the proof of the *ʿImām* as he has internalised the teaching.

These lower five principles correspond to those five higher principles: as the Prophet ﷺ said: “I took it from the five, and handed it to the five.” For this reason it is said that the *ta'yid* (divine support) does not descend beyond the rank of *Hujjah*.

These five ranks (*hadd*) do have Divine support (*ta'yid*), by the help of which they deliver to people the knowledge of the (basic) truths (*ḥaqāʾiq*), by the order of the Masters of their time and the *Natīq* of their time, in order that the world of religion (*ʿalam-i-dīn*) should be kept strong. Just in the same way those five principles of the higher world convey Divine help (*ta'yid*) from the Word (*Kalimah*) to the lower world, so that it may be strong.

For this reason we say that the human soul which is joined to the human body cannot become separated from the earth which is the ultimate resort of the bodies. Similarly, earth cannot be separated from water, of which it has been created, which is its ultimate resort. In the same way water is the ultimate resort of air and air of fire, being derived from it. All these as a whole become the lower world in which all these things are inseparable from one other. Even that greatest circle (i.e., the outer celestial sphere) is connected with every tiny particle (*nuqta*) in the body (*markaz*) of the earth. The *Nafs-i-Kulli* (Universal Soul) is their guardian and guide receiving support (*ta'yid*), from the *ʿAql-i-Kull* (or *The Intelligence*).

Similarly, in the world of religion the *mustajib* (seeker) is in the position of mankind in the material world, his upper limit being the *ma<sup>o</sup>dhun*, just at the ultimate limit of the human body is the earth. The highest or ultimate limit (*niḥāyat* ونهاية) of the *ma<sup>o</sup>dhun* is the *dā<sup>o</sup>ī*, and the limit of the *dā<sup>o</sup>ī* is the *ḥujjah*, just as the ultimate limit of water is air. The limit of the *ḥujjah* is the *Bāb*, as that of air is fire.

The *Bāb* is the door to the <sup>o</sup>Imām. All these, in their entirety, are interconnected with each other. In the same way as in the world of ab-solute truth (*alamu-l-ḥaqqiqat*) everything is connected, from the <sup>o</sup>Imām of the Truth (<sup>o</sup>*Imāmu-l-Haqq*) down to that weak *mustajib* who is like one of the smallest particles (*nuqta*) of earth.

Nothing is left out of the system. The <sup>o</sup>Asās (foundation or basis/ اساس) (*Imām*) is the guardian and guide of all these ranks (*ḥudūd*), by the power of the Divine help (*ta<sup>c</sup>yīd*) which he receives without any intermediary.

Every rank occupies the position of the <sup>o</sup>Imām/<sup>o</sup>Asās in relation to those ranks below him/her, in the order mentioned. Allāh ﷻ says,

يَوْمَ نَدْعُو كُلَّ اُنَاسٍ بِاِمَامِهِمْ

yawma nad<sup>c</sup>ū kulla <sup>o</sup>unāsīm bi-<sup>o</sup>imāmihiḥim

The Day will surely come when

We shall summon every people with their leader (<sup>o</sup>Imām)

(Sūratu-l-<sup>o</sup>Isrā 17:71)

Similarly, the Prophet ﷺ says: “We are from the Light of Allāh, and our supporters (*shī<sup>c</sup>atunā*) are like a blessed tree which has roots, fruits and leaves, just as every tree has.”

By the sense of this *ḥadīth* every *mu<sup>o</sup>min* who swears allegiance to the <sup>o</sup>Imām of the time is a descendant of Sayiddinā Muḥammad ﷺ and is thus a being absorbed in the Divine Light.

The purpose of the activity, which it develops is the search for its perfection, and this is attained in the very being of those appear in this world, such as the Prophets, <sup>o</sup>A<sup>o</sup>immah, Abwāb, Hujjats, Du<sup>o</sup>āt, Ma<sup>o</sup>dḥuns and Mustajibs.

His or her return therefore will be to that place to which the whole tree shall return, because he or she has become one of its leaves. When the *mu<sup>o</sup>min* becomes associated with the true holy family (*ahlu-l-bayt*) and accepts the true doctrine (*dīnu-l-ḥaqq*), obeying it explicitly and implicitly (*bi-dḥahir wa bi-bāṭin*), he or she, although weak in the world, will come into the circle (*da<sup>o</sup>ira*) of the <sup>o</sup>Imām of the time and will attain a great position, on his or her own merits.

As Allāh ﷻ has told us in the Qurʾān:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةً

ʾinna-llāha la yastahyī ʾan yadāribā mathālan mā baʿūdatan

Allāh is not ashamed to make an example of a gnat

(Sūtau-l-Baqarah 2:26)

The *taʾwīl* of this is that the gnat, small as it is, has the likeness of an elephant which is one of the largest animals. Thus it is potentially not so weak as to be able to have that likeness in form. This symbolizes the weak *mustajib* (the one who responds to the call) who spiritually is as small as a gnat. When he or she swears allegiance to the ʾImām of their time and obey him as much as they can, even with and in their weakness, they receive a share in the position of their Lord, just as the gnat has the form of an elephant by creation despite its small size.

Therefore when the human being, who is the crown of creation obeys and integrates with the ranks of this world (*hudūdu-s-suflī*), he or she will return to the Creator who is the ʿAql, and through it he will reach the higher world. He or she will then, just as the ʿAql-i-Kull, offer Allāh ﷻ the worship of thanksgiving, having no other form of worship to offer. When the souls of the obedient slaves of Allāh ﷻ reach the higher world, they have no other form of worship than offering thanks to the Creator, as Allāh ﷻ says in the story of those who enjoy rest in Paradise:

دَعَا هُمْ فِيهَا سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَخَتَمْنَاهُمْ بِهَا سَلَامًا

فِوَاخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

daʿwāhum fihā subḥānaka allahumma

wa taḥiyyatuhum fihā salamun

wa ʾāakhīru daʿwahum ʾan-l-hamdu li-llāhi rabbi-l-ʿālamīn

Their call there is: ‘Glory be to You, Oh Allāh!’

Their greeting there is: ‘Peace!’ [and]

The end of their call is: ‘Praise to Allāh, the Lord of all the worlds!’

(Sūrah Yunūs 10:10)

One of the distinctive marks of the friends of Allāh ﷻ (*ʾawlīyāʾ Allāh* (أولياء الله)) is that they become a folk for whom all places and periods are equal under all circumstances whatsoever. All the days become for them one Feast (ʿeīd/عيد) and one Jumuʿah (جمعة), all the places become one masjid, all directions are the Qiblah for ...

History of the Meeting between Shams-i-Tabrizī ؒ and Mawlānā Rūmī ؒ

“Wherever you turn, there is the face of Allāh ﷻ.”

All their movements become worship, and their silence is obedience.

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُولُوْا فَاُفْتَرِجْهُمُ اللّٰهُ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَّاسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ

wa li-llāhil-mashriqu wa-l-maghribu  
fa °aynamā tuwallū fathammā wajhu-llahi  
°inna-llāha wasi°un °ālīmūn

To Allāh belong the east and the west:  
so whichever way you turn, there is the face of Allāh!

Allāh is indeed all-bounteous, all-knowing.

(Suratu-l-Baqarah 2:115)

Shaykh al-Akbar, Muhyiddin ibn °Arabī says in one of his poems in the *The Bezels of Wisdom* or *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Ch 24 p. 289):

“Before now I used to ignore my friend

If his religion was not close to mine

But now, my ear became receptive to every picture

It is a field of deer, and a convent for nuns.

A temple for idols, and a Ka°abah for pilgrims

A slate for the Bible, and Mushaf for Qur°ān

I devote myself to the religion of Love.

Wherever it can be found.”



This then, increasingly, became the understanding and state of Rūmī through the teachings of Shams as he slowly became his own teacher’s Proof (*Hujjah*) and Shams, in turn, was being uplifted to becoming the Threshold and Door (*Bāb*) of his brother, the °Imām ؒ.

The whole concept of the Bāb or the Door in °Islāmic thought derives from the ḥadīth,

أَنَا مَدِيْنَةُ الْعِلْمِ وَعَلِي هُوَ بَابُهَا

“anā madīnatu-l-°ilm wa °Aliyunn huwa-l-bābuhā”

‘I am the city of knowledge, and °Ali is the door to the city’.

This ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ from at-Tirmidhī makes clear that, if one seeks to acquire knowledge of °Islām, one must pass through Sayyidinā °Alī ؑ. And if you do not pass through Sayyidinā °Alī ؑ, then you surely will never acquire such knowledge.

Which is why, when asked, I say that we are neither Sunnis nor are we Shī°ah but we are members of, and students in, the school of Sayyidinā °Alī ؑ who, after the Prophet ﷺ, is our teacher.



al-Tirmidhi and al-Hakīm have quoted on the authority of °Alī ؑ, who said: “The Messenger of Allāh, peace and blessings be upon him, said: ‘I am the city of knowledge and °Alī is its gate.’”

This ḥadīth is present with the exact stated wording in al-Hakīm’s *Mustadrak °ala al-Sahīhayn*, vol. 3, pp. 126-7 below and *ad-Durar al-muntatharah fi-l-aḥadith al-mushtahirah*, as-Suyuti, pp 23.

۳۸ - حدیث : أنا مدينة العلم وعلي بابها .

The origin of this goes back to when, on the return journey from his Farewell Pilgrimage (*al-ḥajju-l-widāʿ* / الحج الوداع), when the Prophet ﷺ stopped at Ghadira-l-Khum, (which is close to today’s Juhfah), an Oasis between Makkah and Madinah on the 18 Dhū-l-Hijj. It was a watering place where people from different regions would depart from each other and take different routes to their home provinces or tribal areas. He called a gathering of Companions from the various tribes and after addressing them on important matters he announced that he had received a message from Allāh, subḥanahu wa taʿālā (سبحانه), to declare as follows:

“It seems the time approaches when I shall be called away (by Allāh ﷻ) and I shall answer that call. I am leaving for you two precious things and if you hold fast to both of them, you will never go astray after me. They are the Book of Allāh and my progeny that is my Ahlu-l-Bayt. The two shall never separate from each other until they come to me by the Pool (*al-kawthar*).”

Then the Prophet ﷺ continued: “Do I not have more right over the believers than what they have over themselves?” People cried and answered: “Yes, oh Messenger of Allāh.” Then the Prophet ﷺ held up the hand of °Alī ؑ and said:

man kunto mawlahu fa-hadhā °akiun mawlahu,  
Allāh-humma wa al man wālāhu wa °āda man °ādāhu

من كنت مولاه فهذا عليّ مولاه اللهم وال من والاه و عاد من عاداه

“He whose spiritual guide I am, this °Alī is also his spiritual guide,  
Oh Allah, keep him as Your friend who keeps him as his friend,  
and You (Allāh ﷻ) treat him as Your enemy  
who treats him as his enemy.”

It is narrated that °Umar ؓ and Abu Bakr ؓ were the first to congratulate °Alī ؑ. They ran up to him and said: “Well done °Ibn Abi Talib! Today you became the Spiritual Guide, (*Mawla*) of all believing men and women.” (Narrated by sixty Sunnī scholars)

All during the time of the *khilafah* of Abu Bakr, °Umar and °Uthmān (الخلفاء الراشدون) °Alī ﷺ taught and otherwise served the °ummah including the *khulafā'a* themselves who used °Alī ﷺ as a resource due to his immense knowledge, and during the time of °Alī's ﷺ teaching (632-659) his sons Ḥasan ﷺ and Ḥusayn ﷺ served under him both as teachers and dā°is founding what became known as the School of °Alī ﷺ, or more familiarly, the Ṣūfīs who unlike others do not curse<sup>8</sup> the *khulafā'a*, as our teacher °Alī ﷺ never did and, indeed, he always treated them with respect. We believe as Ṣūfī people that everybody has a task or a job to do and they did theirs, regrettably in some instances<sup>9</sup>, as do we, both then and now.

In any case these are some of the roots of the Bāb ﷺ and should be understood clearly in the light of all that went on in that room between Shams-i-Tabrīzī ﷺ and Mawlānā Rūmī ﷺ and what has followed and continues to follow right up to the present day.

What we can safely say is that the Rūmī who went in the door (*bāb*/باب) is not the Rūmī who came out of the same door.



There are many stories about what happened next. First the negative ones. After they left the room, Rūmī took Shams into his home. Shams from then on publically became his 'best friend' and closest companion. As you can imagine, problems arose from the outset, mainly with Rūmī's students, who resented Shams for 'changing' their teacher. The problem initially was put aside by Rūmī's stature; however, it gradually grew into a very big issue.

After receiving repeated death threats, Shams decided to leave town. Soon after, Rūmī fell into a deep state of grief. A few months later, Shams was brought back to Konya by Rūmī's students. After all Rūmī's well-being was worth more than social boundaries. This time, Rūmī decided to legitimize Shams' presence in his home and, using the same tactic as with the goldsmith, he married his very young stepdaughter Kīmiyā° (alchemy) to Shams. Kīmiyā° was around the age of 15 at the time. It is said that Shams for the first time fell in love. And that at the age of 60.

8. According to a ḥadīth recorded in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, when the Prophet's ﷺ opponents greatly increased their persecution, his Companions ﷺ asked him to curse them. At this the Prophet ﷺ replied, "I have not been sent to lay a curse upon men but to be a blessing to them."

9. Here I refer to the widespread loss of spirituality as a result of policies that came to the forefront in the early days of the *khilafate* in both the Sunni and, reactively, the Shī'ah worlds and the rise of social, political, economic, military concerns as being what then, and now, serve to identify Islām.

This must have been a truly memorable moment in his life – not only being with his chosen student, but also being married to his student’s teenage step-daughter. The situation in the household quieted down for a while; after all Shams was now a relative. A few months later, supposedly due to Kimiya’s marriage, her stepbrother engaged in an ‘honor’ killing for ruining Rūmī’s pristine reputation and Kimiya was killed and with that came the end of Shams’ and Rūmī’s living life together and the love(s) of his life.

Another story tells that Shams left Rūmī and returned back to being the wandering, wild bird that he always was.

Another story is that on the night of 5 December 1248, as Rūmī and Shams were still talking, Shams was called to the back door and went out, never to be seen again. It is rumored that Shams was murdered with the connivance of Rūmī’s son, ‘Alā’u-d-Dīn (علاء الدين).

Yet another view was that Shams was simply distracting Rūmī from duties and his work with his students at the madrassah. Rūmī, who besides his other duties, had been spending most of his time reading various ‘holy’ books, was now shifted from full devotion to those books to writing poetry. Shams also did not allow everyone to see him. Sitting at the gate of the madrassah, Shams asked those who came to see Rūmī: “What did you bring as a gift of pleading and gratefulness? Show me that, and I shall show you Rūmī.” One day when someone got angry with this strange man and asked, “What did you bring so that we also can know what to bring?”, Shams replied: “I brought myself. I sacrificed my head for his sake.”

In *Ibtidaname*, Sultan Valad describes how close Shams was to Rūmī and how much he influenced him: “When the public saw this attachment, this loyalty, this rapture, and this love, they were envious and began to be openly critical. The *shuyukh* and other important people openly started rumors saying: ‘What kind of a man is this that he has changed Mawlanā so much? While none of us see goodness in Shams, why does Mawlanā view him as a superior man and honor him? He has neither spiritual state nor knowledge. Is it possible that we might call him a man of the Evil Eye and conclude that he has enchanted Rūmī?’”

When Shams saw that things were getting out of control and that people were turning against him, he suddenly vanished one day. Fifteen months and twenty days from when he met Rūmī, Shams left Konya on February 15, 1246.”

In yet another tale Shams is described as a wandering dervish in search of a companion with whom he could share his gnosis and be a mirror to him, but in truth, no one but Rūmī knew his secret. After meeting with Shams, Mawlānā Rūmī took a retreat from his daily life. He stopped teaching at the institute where he was in the modern sense the Chair or Dean of the College. He would spend days and nights with Shams meditating upon the Eternal Truth not seeing his family and meeting with spiritual disciples for many days at a time.

To those who asked, Rūmī said that Shams was not the ordinary vagabond he appeared to be, but was an educated and well-off alchemist who had left his profession in search of the divine truth.

Eventually, Shams disappeared. It is said that Rūmī's jealous disciples murdered him. No one really knows what happened to Shams, but his effect on Mawlānā Rūmī had been that of a catalyst; Rūmī was transformed. No one denies that

This separation appeared to be a separation of two humans, but in reality it was the separation of a man and his home. Just like a man who has never been happy after he left his place of origin, and finds satisfaction only in the remembrance of Allāh ﷻ, likewise Rūmī longed for reunion with Allāh ﷻ. William Chittick writes this of their separation: "Separation from Shams was but the appearance; separation from the Divine Beloved was the reality."

This latter sounds closer to the truth, but the real truth is that very few people really understand exactly what took place in that room between Shams and Rūmī and this may be because the tale is usually related by Sunni people who don't know or understand the relationship between *nubuwa* and *walayah* even if they are Muslims rather than orientalist or gross sensationalists.

Most of them have never gotten any further than the issues of the 5th thru 7th hijjri centuries in their thought or understanding though, as Rūmī was, they are often quite knowledgeable about all of that.

I say this because if, for whatever reasons, your thinking or understanding ends with *nubuwwa* as it did, for instance with ʿUmar ؓ, when he famously claimed after the death of the Prophet ﷺ, "We've got the Book." meaning, I suppose, why do we need 'the Family ﷺ' for, because everything is in the Qurʾān. Even though the problem then, and now, is that whilst you have the Book, the Qurʾan, it doesn't mean that you actually understand even the words (especially if you aren't an Arab), let alone the meaning.

Contrary to this, it would seem that most peoples' interest in Rūmī is caught up in Rumi's love for Shams and grief over his disappearance, which inspired one of his lyric masterpieces, or *The Works of Shams of Tabrīz (Divān-e-Shams-e-Tabrīzī)*" the title of which underscores a realization that Rūmī had while looking for his lost friend in Damascus:

Why should I seek him? I am the same as he.

His essence speaks through me.

I have been looking for myself.

The reunion with the "beloved," or "divine primal root" from which one has been separated would become a key theme in Rūmī's work. *The Masnavi*, the poet's famous six-volume opus, which opens with the now famous lines:

Listen to the reed and the tale it tells,

How it sings of separation...

The desire for, and movement towards, reunion with the Divine Rūmī calls 'love' and as people understand his thought there is nothing better to be than a 'lover.'

Our perspective, while appreciating the magnificent poetry of Rūmī, is that all of that is really the action of the *breaker* or the *mukasir* who was mainly responsible for attracting prospective converts like Rūmī and breaking their attachments to other 'ways' of thought.

Here this rather conservative, upper class, establishment faqih, dean of the Kulliyat ash-Shari'ah, son of his father, Baha ad-Dīn Valad from Balkh, known as Sultān al-°Ulamā°, who meets this itinerant embroiderer and maker of belts, known all around southern Central Asia as a 'Sūfī' darwish, spends forty days with him in a closed room and emerges as a wild dancing and whirling love poet who is in and out of ecstasy etc...

For his audience in present day America it is his love poems, his samā° (سَمَاع), his ritual whirling dance and his ecstasy that are all 'the thing', what the news is and what the buzz is all about...most famous poet in America etc.

For me it is, "What happened? Why? How?" Who really was this Shams-i-Tabrīzī ﷺ who broke open the conservative establishment °alim Mawlānā Rūmī and turned him into what the world marvels at and reads omnivorously, and attends the samā° whenever it comes to some city in the world or who travel all the way to Konya just to visit his tomb and witness the samā° at the source.

Truthfully poetry is not my main ‘thing’, though there are poems that move me greatly and my father, who was a great lover of poetry, used to read it to me instead of kid’s bedtime stories so I received an early education in poetry and an appreciation for it.

When I was four I used to pester my grandmother to tell me stories as she was a great story teller. One day though she had had enough and told me, “Skipper (my nickname), I’m tired of telling you stories all the time so I’m going to teach you to read so you can tell yourself stories. And she did. And the book she taught me to read from was a giant illustrated edition of the Bible (both Old and New Testaments and the Psalms) and I was gone from then to now.

G–d Gott me from the beginning or close to it.

So poetry, though it is loved, is not what I have focused on and, many years later, after I had taken bay<sup>°</sup>ah in the Shādh<sup>°</sup>dhulī School of Sufism, I came across a line of the Shaykh ؒ in which he was commenting on the difference between the Shādh<sup>°</sup>dhulī and other turūq, in which he said (words to the affect of): “The Way of most of the *turūq* has to do with travelling (*sulūk*/سلوك) but the way of the Shādh<sup>°</sup>dhulī has to do with attraction (*jadhb*/جذب).”

So following along that line for more than thirty years, I have been attracted to many things, and, since my shaykh, Dr. Ibrahim Batawi ؒ never put any obstacles in the way of my studies, aside from warning me about the dangers of reading too much Ibn ul-<sup>°</sup>Arabī early on, I have gone on to study many areas of <sup>°</sup>Islam and Šūfism as well as the thought and understanding of other religions.

When my shaykh died ؒ I was left rather alone at the age of some seventy years until I came across a ḥadīth which went:

من مات بغير بدون معرفة امام الزمن مات ميتة جاهلية

“who dies without knowing the <sup>°</sup>Imām of the time dies in ignorance.”

Reading this ḥadīth deeply frightened me, for here I was in my early seventies, my shaykh ؒ, who I had relied on for some thirty years had recently died, and now what was I to do?

I immediately set out on a search for the <sup>°</sup>Imām of my time, al-<sup>°</sup>Imām az-Zamān, and, being a Shādh<sup>°</sup>dhulī, I was attracted to many people and places including Naṣir al-Khusro and Hasan aṣ-Ṣabah and Shams Tabrīz who was the second son of the <sup>°</sup>Imām of Alamut, <sup>°</sup>Ala-Uddīn Muḥammad ؒ, the 26th <sup>°</sup>Ismā<sup>°</sup>ilī <sup>°</sup>Imām who had two sons, one of whom was the mentor and teacher of Jalālu-d-dīn Rūmī as well the uncle of the 27th <sup>°</sup>Ismā<sup>°</sup>ilī <sup>°</sup>Imām Ruknuddīn Khurshah.

I thought it was amazing that this establishment Sunni faqih had been mentored and taught and ultimately fundamentally altered and changed by the son of ʿAla-Uddīn Muḥammad ﷺ, the 26th ʾIsmāʿīlī ʾImām who, in turn, had been raised and taught in every degree and dimension of ʾIsmāʿīlī thought which was very subtle and sophisticated and was rooted, originally, in Fātimī thought and then the thought of the Fatimid *dāʿī* Muʿayyad fid-Dīn al-Shīrazī, the *Hujjah* of the ʾImam Maʿad al-Mustanṣir Billāh (المستنصر بالله), the teacher of the Fatīmī *dāʿī* and poet, Naṣir al-Khushro.

At first it passed by in the blink flick domain but then I sort of said to myself, “Whoa. This is something very amazing and could be the answer for everyone who has ever asked, “What happened that changed Rūmī from what he was to what he became?” and the answer was so perfect. Obviously he had come under the aegis of an ʾIsmāʿīlī breaker (*mukasir*)<sup>10</sup> and who was it other than Shamsuddīn Muḥammad, also known as Shams Tabriz ﷺ?

Recall that although Shams perceived a special quality in Mawlana Rūmī at their first encounter, he felt Rūmī had not yet reached a level of spiritual maturity which would allow him to receive him favorably. After waiting for 16 years, he felt it was now his mission to release Rūmī in order to unlock his spiritual greatness. “I don’t mix much with anyone. Even with one so great that though you sift the whole world you won’t find another like him; sixteen years passed during which I said only ‘salām’ and left.” (*Maqalat* 290)

And it is not that everyone who moves up the ladder from the time the first question is put into their mind or heart who turns out to be an ecstatic poet and a whirling trance dancer.

That was what was needed by Rūmī and that was what was needed at that point in time and space. This was the time that the greatest center of Islamic power, Baghdad, was destroyed, the greatest library in the world of the time had been destroyed, Damascus was weakened by the submission or destruction of the Ayyubid states which caused a shift of ʾIslāmic influence to the Mamluks in Cairo and finally the submission or destruction of the Bahri Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt. It was also the time when Iranian historians began writing in Persian rather than Arabic and a time when the impregnable fortress of Alamut surrendered without a fight, accepting a deal that spared the lives of many of its people.

10. Albeit that he was a *Hujjah* but despite that was operating as a *Mukasir* who (relatively speaking) was at the very bottom of the hierarchical chain even if he was, obviously, one with a definite purpose.

Of course in relating all that I have, I understand that Rūmī was unquestionably a Sunni. It is well known that Mawlānā Rūmī followed the Hanafī school [*madhhab*] of Islamic Law, in which, as we mentioned earlier, he was raised by his father, who was a highly respected jurist from Balkh in present-day Afghanistan.

There are also many who argue that Shams was a Persian Shafiʿite Muslim like the bulk of the Persians, and indeed Central and South-east Asians, at that time. He studied fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) extensively including *al-Tanbih fi-l-fiqh ash-Shafiʿī*, written by Hazrat Abu Ishāq ash-Shirazi, a Shafiʿī jurist of the 11th century.

Once Shams was questioned if he was “a faqih or a faqir?”

“Both faqih and faqir,” he replied.

“Then why speak of fiqh?” (at this time he was known as a faqih).

He answered, “Poverty (*faqr*) is of such a nature that it cannot be spoken about with that group...[because] the faqir speaks beyond the boundaries of knowledge and speaks of mysteries in a knowledgeable way under the cloak of knowledge.” (*Maqalat* 326)

In those very dangerous days (as in these) many a man passed himself off as something else using the practice of *taqiyyah* (تقية) in the belief that life is a gift from Allāh ﷻ and should be preserved and not squandered. *Taqiyyah* was further developed to protect Shiʿah who were often a minority and under pressure. Thus in the Shiʿah view, *taqiyyah* is lawful in situations where there is overwhelming danger of loss of life or property and where no danger to the inner conviction as to the veracity of one’s faith would occur.

Again in accord with Fāṭimī and, later, ʿIsmāʿilī thought the point is not ‘what’ you are but ‘who’ you are and the climbing of a ladder is sometimes only to reach where it was you started from: a being with a pure heart created within the best of forms.

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ؛ ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِينَ

laqadā ḵhalaqnā-l-ʾiṇsana fī aḥṣani taqwīmī:  
ṭhumma radadnahu ʾasfala sāfilīn

We created the human in the best of forms  
and then they descended to the lowest of forms.

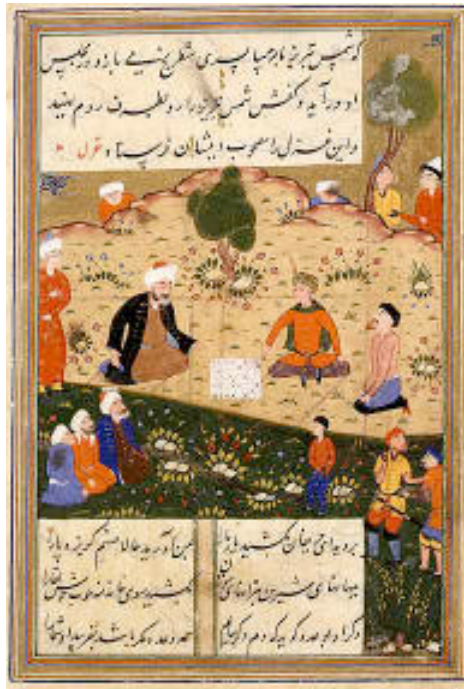
(Sūrah Tīn 95:4)

Returning the human being to the original form is what the spiritual path is all about and there is no doubt that Shams wholly transformed Rūmī’s life and thought after arriving in Konya in 642/1244.



Whatever Shams was, a Shāfi'i or an Ismā'īlī, a darwish or an embroiderer or an itinerant peddler, or a *majdhūb*, the fact remains that he transformed Rūmī. What I have tried to do is to suggest a way that might have happened given certain possible realities based on Shamsuddīn Muḥammad being the second son of a Lord of Alamut, °Imām °Ala-Uddīn Muḥammad ﷺ, the 26th °Ismā'īlī °Imām.

As Shams wrote in the *Maqalat*, "A life without love is of no account. Don't ask yourself what kind of love you should seek, spiritual or material, divine or mundane, East or West. Divisions only lead to more divisions. Love has no labels, no definitions. It is what it is, pure and simple. Love is the water of life. And a lover is a soul on fire! The universe turns differently when fire loves water."



Do not build much,  
for I intend to leave you in ruins.  
If you build two hundred houses in a manner that the bees do,  
I shall still make you as homeless as a fly.  
If you are the mount Qaf in stability.  
I shall make you turn like a millstone.



I've written enough about all of this. Any more and it just goes round and round like that millstone. This has not been about poetry nor has it really been about Rūmī and/or Shams unless you can accept that he was Shamsuddīn Muḥammad the second son of a Lord of Alamut, °Imām °Ala-Uddīn Muḥammad ﷺ, the 26th °Imām ﷺ.

I wrote on page 45 that “understanding this (that *walaya* is the step after *nubuwa*) one can understand that this (understanding) is a drop in the ocean of the *ta'wīl* understanding. That the ears through which Rūmī heard were the ears of a Sunni faqih who was still living in the exclusive realm of *nubuwwa* and this was his opening to the ever expanding dimension of the *walayah* which represents the only real hope for °Islām to continue, as it began, in expanding the dimensions and frontiers of understanding.”

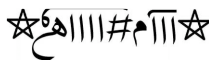
This is the key to comprehending how Shams changed Rūmī from what he was to what he became. *Wilayah* is in fact the inward essence of prophethood (*Nubuwwa*). It is the authority that enabled Mūsā ﷺ to perform the miracle of turning his staff into a snake.

Couple that understanding with the understanding of the ladder and the rungs of that ladder: Mukasir, Ma'dhūn maḥṣūr, Ma'dhūn muṭlaq, Dā'i maḥṣur, Dā'i al-Muṭlaq, Dā'i al-Balāgh, Ḥujjat, Bāb, Imām, °Asās and Nāṭiq and how one makes one's way from rung to rung.

And be sure to understand that books may provide 'information' but that in *climbing* you must have your hand in the hand of the one who has his hand in the hand of the man who is at least one rung up who must pull you up and you either go up or you stop where you stop and you pretty well can understand the process how and whereby Shams changed Rūmī with a few things added in by way of the 'ear whispered' teachings which, obviously, we can't *talk* about.

So I thank you who have made your way through all of this or even skimmed it or listened online while doing the dishes. My hope is that it will prove useful to you for the purification of your heart.

wa-llāhu °alim

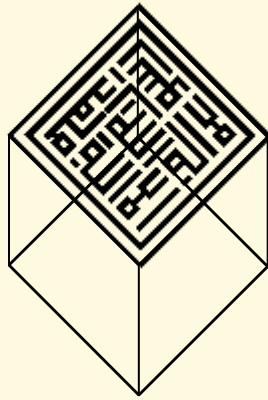




in one door and out the other

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